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How Drake will change the world

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The verdict on the most innovative game around!

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TOMB RAIDER
Hot screens showing Lara like you've never seen her before!

review

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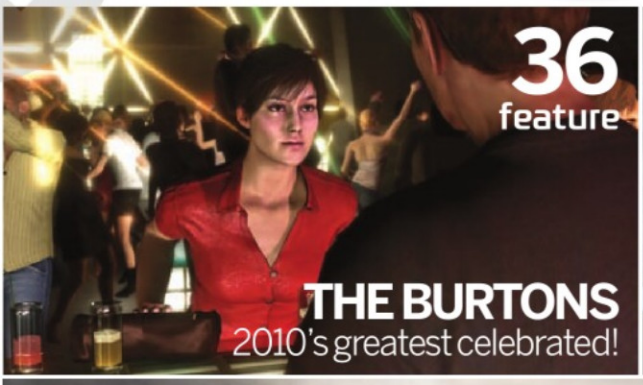

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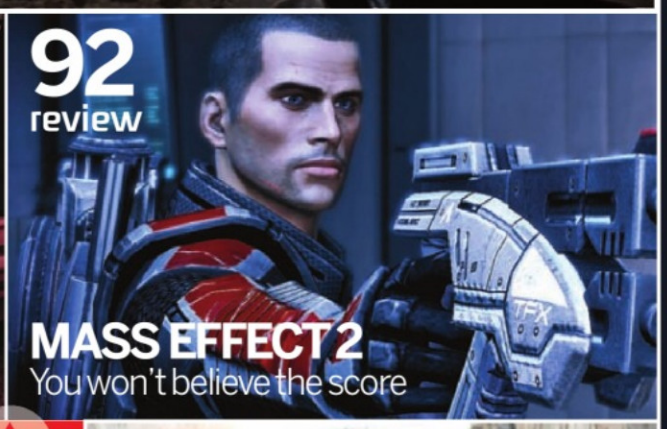

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Welcome PLAY

The UK's best independent PlayStation magazine

The invasion has begun

My god. MY GOD. So many games! It would be great if I could just point you in the direction of the rest of the mag and say 'enjoy', before leaning back with a big fat smile on my big fat face.

Unfortunately, it would look bad having a massive white space to kick off this issue of **Play** and the higher-ups in their fancy suits have 'gently' pointed out that I'm not allowed to pass off white space as a free doodle canvas. Damn restrictions. It's so hard to innovate these days! So instead, allow me to elaborate.

We have the first details on *Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception*. To celebrate the long-awaited reveal, we serve up a juicy preview of what to expect, speculate on what might happen and remember the great moments from the series to date. You don't need me to tell you we're super excited about it, but we are *super* excited about it, in ways that are too rude to mention. The doodle space would have been handy to illustrate it, actually.

That's backed up with an in-depth look at *Killzone 3* as we finally get our grubby hands on it, an exclusive multiplayer dissection of *Homefront*, new screenshots of *Tomb Raider*, Move ripped apart so we can show you how it works, a breakdown of *Marvel Vs Capcom 3* characters, reviews of *LittleBigPlanet 2*, *Dead Space 2* and *Mass Effect 2* along with a look at *Mass Effect 3*...

That may have been the longest sentence ever published but it's like I said at the start. So. Many. Games. It's ridiculous that I don't even know where to suggest you begin. Fortunately, it's all in the mag, so wherever you turn, you'll land on something awesome (unless it's an advert – then just turn another page). It also means I can be lazy and point you in the direction of the rest of the mag, just like I promised.

Enjoy.

Editor

We serve up a juicy preview of what to expect from Uncharted 3

contributors

Dave Shaw
True story: Dave Shaw owes us a copy of *CSI*. Not the boxset but the game. No one's even sure how this situation came about but every time we ask him where it is, he says he'll have a look and then secretly hopes we forget. It's not going to happen. Play your part, too! Email him at dave.shaw@imagine-publishing.co.uk and remind him that he owes us that game.

Chris McMahon
Or, as he's now known, The Human Playlist. Who else could correctly guess what issue of **Play** the original *MGS* review was in? Not you. Because you're not The Human Playlist. Not me. Because I'm not The Human Playlist. ONLY CHRIS. What issue was *Dino Crisis 2* in, Chris? "Dunno," he says, before walking off without looking back. Oh.

Darran Jones
"The thing is, Joker is so unpredictable, he's really predictable." These are the words of the man who reviews Blu-rays for us, talking about *The Dark Knight*. It's terrifying. It's also unrelenting. "It could have been Christian Bale ****ing on a plate and people would still say it's amazing." And then after all that? "I'd still give it four stars, though." Sigh.

the PLAY promise

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We will always bring you the most in-depth, impartial, honest reviews and will never bow down to PR or advertising pressure. We have some of the most experienced reviewers in the industry and we're not afraid to use them. And we take our own screenshots so you can see what the game looks like *when you play it*. We will be the first to break the biggest stories, the first to cover the biggest games and in the most detailed way. We will only ever bang on about the very best PlayStation games, the ones that we would pay our own cash for. We aren't afraid of expressing an opinion, especially when it's for your benefit. So don't expect our previews to simply regurgitate a load of internet or press release tosh – we'll be telling you whether a game is looking good or not, regardless of the stage of the code.

We want to fuel your passion for gaming like no other magazine and we want you to trust everything you read here. If you don't then you can simply stop buying it. That's how confident we are that you'll love **Play**. Promise.

PLAY

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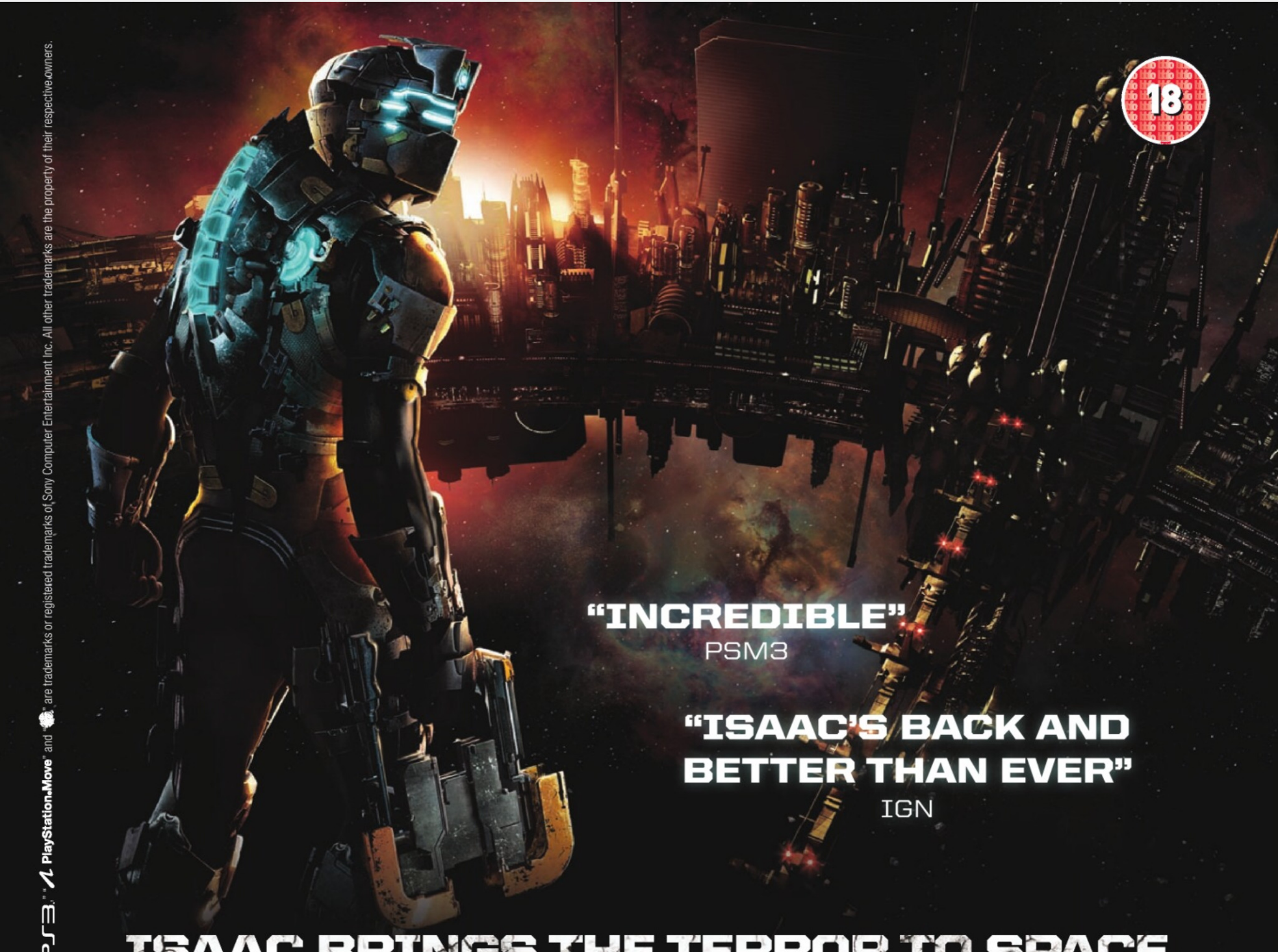
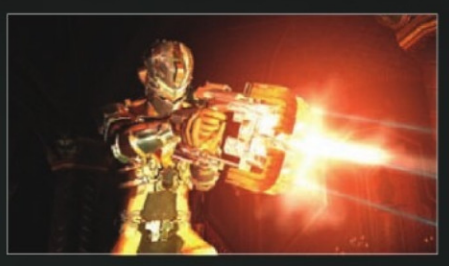


ISAAC BRINGS THE TERROR TO SPACE.

The nightmare has returned. But this time, Isaac is the one in charge. With new weapons and zero-G ability, now it's time for his enemies to feel the fear.

DEAD SPACE 2



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Where fact + opinion ÷ PlayStation = the truth

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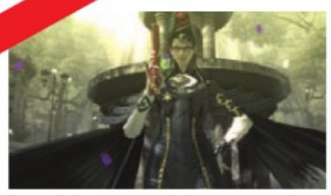
"Street Fighter hit the mass market and in my opinion it influenced every fighting game that followed it" – Ed Boon, creator and producer, Mortal Kombat , p.15

2010 – HEAVEN OR HELL?

The good and the bad of the last year on PS3



NEW IP Titles such as *Heavy Rain*, *Enslaved*, *Bayonetta*, *Vanquish*, *Blur*, *Split/Second* and *Darksiders* all really impressed us in 2010. New IP after new IP came through the year and gave us interesting new gameplay mechanics and new stories.

CASUAL GAMING Move is a big leap into the casual field for Sony, but the release of family-friendly fare on PSN has also been welcome. The casual boom has existed more on mobile devices like the iPhone, so even if its impact hasn't touched you in 2010, it will in 2011.

INDEPENDENT STUDIOS (WITH BACKING) Two studios that had excellent years were Obsidian (*Fallout: New Vegas*) and Platinum (*Vanquish*). Both are independent studios exploring interesting IP, both were given superb backing by their publishers and both have cemented their reputations.

SPORTS GAMES What a year it's been in sport. *FIFA 11* continued to hold its own in the realm of football, *Madden NFL* did great things for American soccer, *NBA 2K11* was one of the best basketball games we've ever played and *NHL 11* continued to push that genre forward.

PSN It was a very good year for the PSN. On the game side we had the excellent *Joe Danger* and *Critter Crunch* to enjoy, while we also got the launch of services like LoveFilm, Mubi, 4oD and ITV Player. And then there were the beta tests for *LittleBigPlanet 2* and *Killzone 3*.

RACING VARIETY Car-based games had a very good 2010. We had *Gran Turismo 5*, *Split/Second* and *NFS: Hot Pursuit*. All excellent games and all offering different experiences. We really couldn't have asked for more except that maybe more people bought some of them.

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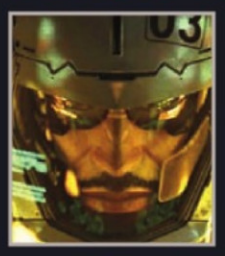
Need To Know IMPORTANT GAMING NEWS YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS



The Revolution waits

Square Enix has delayed the release of *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*, seemingly expressing concern after the reception of *Final Fantasy XIV* on PC. Apparently it wants *Deus Ex* to have some more polishing time before release. We say if it needs it then it should get it. We can wait, so long as it's brilliant.

del Toro game revealed

Film director Guillermo del Toro has finally revealed his videogame project with publisher THQ and *Red Faction* developer Volition named *inSANE*. While details are thin we know it's going to be a trilogy starting from 2013 and could have a movie tie-in. It's most likely to be a horror game of some kind.

More GT5 updates inbound

You may have thought that the release of *GT5* last November would have been the end of things, but Polyphony Digital doesn't seem to know how to stop making its game. Yamauchi and co are now working on creating in-car views for all cars, not just the premium models.

'FAN' REVOLT The revolt over the redesign of Cole MacGrath for inFamous 2 was disappointing, but the uproar around Dante's redesign in DmC led to some rejecting Enslaved. Originality it seems has no place in the minds of these 'hater-fans'.

POOR SALES Plenty of very good games were struck down by poor sales that had nothing to do with the quality of the titles. For instance, *Rock Band 3* was superb again last year, but performed abysmally. Are full-priced releases just too much to stomach in the global recession?

NBA ELITE 11 It used to be known as *NBA Live*, but taking on the *Elite* moniker did nothing for this franchise as it was chopped by EA before we could even take a good look at it. The reason? It sucked and EA wasn't afraid to say so. Where now for EA's NBA gaming?

EX-INDEPENDENT STUDIOS Bizarre Creations had a rough year after *Blur* struggled against *Split/Second* and then *Blood Stone* failed to impress, too. Activision now wants rid of the studio. Harmonix returned to independence after *Rock Band 3* flopped.

ENGINES Some of the old game engines started to look a bit dated this year. The Unreal Engine 3 has been around for a while and is easier to spot than ever, but the Gamebryo engine, used in *New Vegas*, was particularly concerning. New blood is desperately needed.

A mixed year

2010 wasn't all sunshine and violets says Jon Gordon, whatever that means

opinion

I DON'T LIKE being the one to bring everyone down, but 2010 wasn't a great year. We had a few uplifting moments and some titles that I'd like to think we'll be looking back on as true greats of this generation, but the year as a whole didn't stack up as planned. You only have to look at the reviews in this very issue for games like *Dead Space 2*, *Mass Effect 2* and *LittleBigPlanet 2* to see that 2011 is kicking off much stronger than 2010 ended.

The problems of 2010 were many, but mostly financial. On one hand it felt like a number of games got released sooner than they should've been because they needed to make some money. I can't help but think that *GT5* would have performed even better than it did if it'd been given more time. The patches that keep coming are proof that it wasn't ready when it launched.

Money has also been an issue for consumers who kept it in their pocket when presented with superb new titles like *Enslaved*, *Blur* or *Heavy Rain*. Longevity and value for money were often the biggest complaints, which is a shame, because quality was never questioned.

I was a bit disappointed by *God Of War III*, which didn't live up to my expectations and felt a little contrived after the effortless brilliance we had experienced with *Uncharted 2*. Perhaps that's an unfair comparison, but it's how I felt.

This could be a truly great year of gaming and it all starts right here

That I enjoyed *Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow* more says a lot I think.

But for all that the final quality of the year was mixed I feel that it has kept the PS3's momentum going strong into this year and I have very high hopes indeed for 2011. This could be a truly great year of gaming and it all starts right here.

FPS VARIETY It would seem that the *COD* influence is too hard to avoid. Despite subtle differences we couldn't help but feel that *Black Ops*, *MOH*, *Bad Company 2* and *MAG* didn't do much to stand out. Thankfully titles like *Brink*, *Rage* and more in 2011 should help to mix things up.

SSX talk

What SSX: Deadly Descents needs to be amazing

WE WERE PLEASED to hear that EA would be bringing *SSX* to the PS3, but like many others we've been a little concerned with the direction it appears to be going in. Could *Deadly Descents* be getting too serious? Well, here are some things for EA to keep in mind.

> STYLE, NOT SKILL We don't seem to get pure fun from our extreme sports games these days. *Tony Hawk's* titles have fallen away, *Skate* is a sim and *Shaun White* is barely worth mentioning. *SSX* should be stylish and fun.

> KEEP CONTROL The current word is that *Deadly Descents* will use the same sort of controls as *Skate* with its flick-stick mechanic. It could translate well, but ease of use is one of the reasons *SSX* was so inclusive.

> COMBO FRIENDLY Giving people something to chase is as important as giving them something to run away from. We expect high-risk snowboarding in *Deadly Descents* with some score chasing and combo building.

> WALL OF SOUND One of our 200 greatest PlayStation moments was hearing the sound fade out playing *SSX* as we pulled off an amazing trick. EA shouldn't abandon that simple, but very effective sound design.

> BUILD IT WELL One of our bigger complaints about *Shaun White Snowboarding* was how poorly suited the Assassin's Creed Engine was to having snow. EA needs to invest in a strong foundation here.

War is coming

BioWare teases massive repercussions to events in Dragon Age II

There is much still to be said and done with *Dragon Age*, according to BioWare, who recently spoke exclusively to **Play**. The first game in this series, *Dragon Age: Origins* has already hinted at catastrophic events in this world's future and BioWare claims that *Dragon Age II* begins to give you more details about what is to come, but promises it's keeping much of it under wraps for the time being.

"The best part of working in a franchise we created is that we can change and evolve it, and we intend to do just that," lead designer Mike Laidlaw said. "As Varric [the narrator of your character's tale in *DAII*] says, '...the entire world stands on the brink of war, and you need the one person who could help you put it back together.'"

Laidlaw promised that while players of *Dragon Age II* will begin to see what this war is all about, there are still likely to be surprises. "What we're not answering, for now, is what war? Where are the lines drawn? Who will be fighting?" he told us. "By the end of *Dragon Age II*, though, a lot of those questions will be answered and, well, that certainly gives players an idea of where we'll head in the future.

"Our lead writer, David Gaider, regularly says, 'The best part about building a sand castle is that you eventually get to kick it over,' so expect some upheaval in the near future." And like that *Dragon Age II* just got about ten times more exciting.

word on the tweet

evan_wells
"*PixelJunk Shooter 2* looks like too much fun! I loved the first one and the new online mode looks like a blast!"

Naughty Dog's Evan Wells still has some time to share the love amid the *Uncharted 3* chaos.

Rallying the troops

Rally resurgence on the horizon

Rallying has been in decline according to Codemasters' *DiRT 3* dev team and that may explain why many of the game's competitors have fallen by the wayside. That's the thinking of *DiRT 3* designer Paul Coleman, who recently spoke to **Play** about the upcoming *Colin McRae* sequel.

"Back in the day it all started with *Sega Rally* and it snowballed from there," Coleman told us. "At the time rally was a very popular form of motor racing that had real heroes that people aspired to. Colin McRae was one of those drivers. Rally has lost its way a little over the last few years and the popularity of the sport has faded a little."

However, it's far from doom and gloom. The *DiRT* incarnation of the *Colin McRae* series has proven very popular. There's also the rise of a new generation of rally drivers who are making a name for themselves online with amazing YouTube videos and skilful precision driving could help bring the genre back.

"With new drivers like Ken Block and Kris Meeke making their way into the World Rally Championship and the new rule changes levelling the playing field, I am confident we'll see a resurgence in the popularity of the sport," Coleman concluded.

REASONS WHY...

Resistance 3 should excite you

THIS TIME IT'S PERSONAL In many ways *Resistance 3* is looking to make things personal. The combat promises to be tighter and more in your face while the story is about a husband and father who turned his back on this conflict making one final stand. This could get emotional.

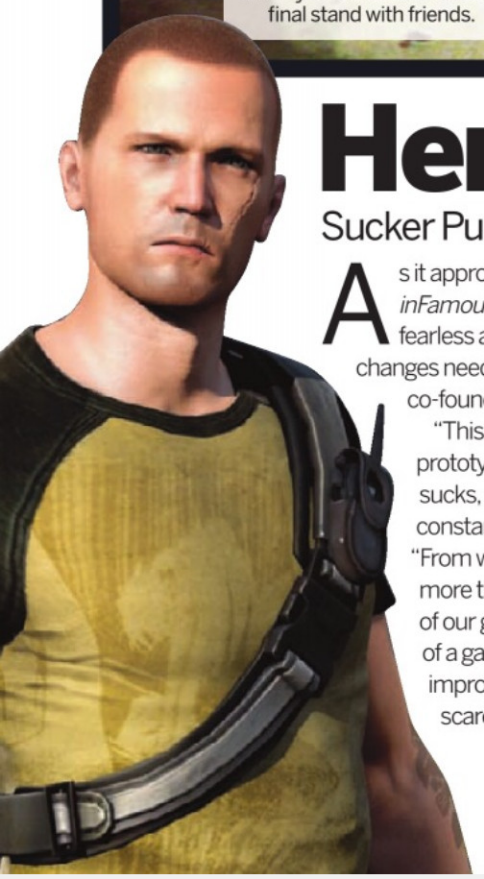
STAT ATTACK $45 million made by EA on FIFA 09 and 10 DLC

IT'S NOT WAR *Resistance 3* is all about survival and that means it's not pretty. Joe Capelli is going to have to get his hands dirty if he wants to save his family and you shouldn't expect much outside help.

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED Now that the Chimera have inherited the Earth they are making it more hospitable. The whole planet is being cooled and alien life is sprouting up everywhere. That's bound to lead to some weird results.

YOU'RE NOT ALONE Co-op will play a big part in your *Resistance 3* experience. While your fight against the Chimera is going to be bleak at times you will be able to make that final stand with friends.

IT'S BIG Size matters... in some respects. It doesn't always matter, but in *Resistance 3* we think it will. The scale Insomniac has been working on was never exactly small, but you just have to look at some of the machines you'll be facing to know this is blowing up.



Heroes without fear

Sucker Punch has to take risks according to inFamous 2 producer

As it approaches its PS3 exclusive sequel *inFamous 2*, Sucker Punch has had to remain as fearless as possible in facing the challenges and changes needed to make its game great, the studio's co-founder Brian Fleming has told us.

"This process – taking the form of prototypes, iteration, or just plain 'wow, that sucks, we got to try something else' is a constant part of our work on games," he said. "From what we hear, we do this as much or more than most places, and I think of it as one of our greatest strengths. On the core features of a game you have to be totally unafraid to improve the product, at all times I think. It scares the crap out of our marketing and PR teams sometimes, but I think the final products are better off as a result."

Perhaps the most important example of this has been the relocation of Cole from Empire City to New Marais, which the team saw as essential even though it would cost time and money to achieve. Ultimately, making *inFamous 2* as fun as possible is the only consideration for Sucker Punch. "The story we're telling requires Cole to move away from Empire City, so we never really considered staying there," Fleming said. "Part of what is fun for us is building new places to explore and tell stories, so the idea of this game being set in the same place never occurred to us. It's more expensive to produce a game like this – obviously we could have reused lots of our work from the last game if we stayed put, but where's the fun in that?"

QUESTION?

What should you expect from Elder Scrolls V

WE WERE DELIGHTED that Bethesda finally announced a sequel to *Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*, a game that helped to define the early ambition of this generation of consoles. But what will *Skyrim* be about? Where will it take us? We take a look.

Smaller scale?

Setting the game in Skyrim would appear to limit it to a specific region of Tamriel. Skyrim isn't as big as Cyrodiil either but we don't expect the game to be limited to just one area and a smaller map probably wouldn't hurt the game.

New engine

One thing we know is that Bethesda will be using a new engine. The Gamebryo engine has been good to us through *Oblivion* and *Fallout 3*, but it's time for a change. Whether id has offered any help with the engine is unknown.

Warring nation

Skyrim is believed to be a place of great political and social upheaval during the time of *Oblivion*, being one of the oldest settled regions for elves and humans. It's also very rich. Sounds like a fine mixture of factors for a barney to us.

Two centuries

It is believed that the events of *Skyrim* will be taking place around 200 years after those of *Oblivion*. This was hinted at during the promotion of the *Elder Scrolls* novels, which are supposed to bridge the gap between the games.

Dragons rising

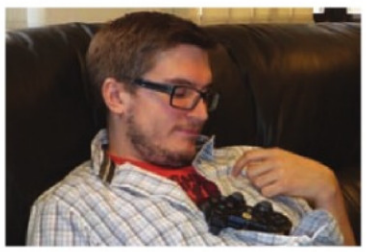
The trailer for *Skyrim* didn't give much away, but it did seem to feature a lot of dragon action. Could we be facing some fiery reptiles in the latest *Elder Scrolls*? We would say it's looking like a very good possibility.

ANSWER:

The best fantasy RPG to date, we hope

Fitness Quest IX

MONTH ONE: the fat man stumbleth



THE QUEST TO continue The Greatest Review Anyone's Ever Seen hit a bit of a hitch this past month, as it turns out the timeframe of this past month included the Christmas period in this past month. As you can probably guess, this past month didn't go down too well, even with *EA Sports Active 2* staring at Ian's portly cheeks and trying as hard as an inanimate object can to guilt trip him into actually doing some physical activity. Needless to say, it failed quite spectacularly.

Ian did manage some physical activity – he wasn't a completely sedentary lump as we fully expected him to be. Unfortunately, moving one arm numerous times a day to eat crisps and drink coffee doesn't quite count. And the point where he moved the kettle into the living room so he no longer had to walk "all the way" to the kitchen was pushing it a bit.

Fortunately, as the new year kicked in we were able to convince Ian that changing his ways would fit in nicely with the preconceived notions that modifying one's behaviour at the beginning of a yearly cycle is the right thing to do. He might get on board with this way of thinking and be able to continue The Best Review Of Anything You've Ever Seen In Your Lives Ever. Then again he might not and just get fatter instead. Will he? Won't he? Do you care? Tune in next month to find out.

Origins of Apocalypse

New racer with real-world setting inspired the latest MotorStorm

Development on *Apocalypse* actually began when *MotorStorm 1* was being launched, but in a different guise.

word on the tweet

suda_51
"After playing Criterion games, other racing games just don't compare"

***No More Heroes* creator Goichi Suda is clearly a fan of *Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit* and so he should be.**

Speaking exclusively to **Play** recently, Evolution Studios' Matt Southern explained a little about how the ideas behind *MotorStorm: Apocalypse* evolved, the real-world settings it scouted during development and how it nearly got them into hot water with US authorities. Originally planned as a new IP racer for PS3 called *Urban Smash*, *MotorStorm: Apocalypse* ultimately turned away from real locations, but retained the highly destructible and chaotic environments it had been designing.

> Obviously, if five of you are wandering around Washington DC with cameras you tend to get noticed

"We built prototypes of urban racers based in real cities," Southern began, giving us the story behind the genesis of the highly ambitious racer. "We're very used to reference trips but we weren't very used to doing them in cities. So, we did one in London which obviously is comparatively low cost, and we built a track around Hyde Park, taking in a few of the landmarks around there." As we understand it, you may even be able to watch an early prototype video of this track on YouTube, but this wasn't the one that almost got them arrested.

"Then we did one in Washington DC, which was kind of interesting," Southern said. "Obviously if five of you are wandering around Washington DC with cameras you tend to get noticed. Particularly when you're interested in the White House, and The Pentagon, and the Capital, and all the major landmarks. What we didn't tell the cops when they asked us was that we planned to wreck those buildings in our prototype."

Ultimately all that work helped set the tone and technical groundwork for what is being achieved with *MotorStorm: Apocalypse*, a process that has been going on ever since the original *MotorStorm*. "*Urban Smash* was worked on a little bit when *MotorStorm 1* was just about to be launched," he revealed. "By the time it had become *MotorStorm: Apocalypse* we were about midway through developing *MotorStorm: Pacific Rift*."

YOUR SAY

For goodness Drake!

How excited are you about Uncharted 3?

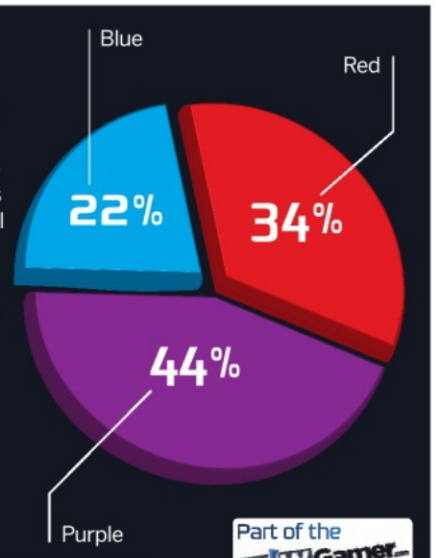
AFTER ALL THE rumours and speculation Naughty Dog finally revealed *Uncharted 3* to the world last month. It was very exciting. You can read our impressions and all the clues we managed to sleuth starting on page 52, but what we wanted to know was how you all felt about it.

I'm sure it'll be a great game, but whether or not I get to play it depends if I got the money. I played the first one but found no replay value even with Trophies and I'm yet to play the second one **– rbl007**

Purple, it is the best colour there **– UberCool_UberGoff**

I'm really looking forward to the third instalment as long as it's exciting and action-packed like the previous ones but I'm not looking forward to the movie **– kev schmit**

Seeing as it's focusing on Drake's relationship with Sully it's basically a carbon copy of *Indiana Jones 3*, with Sean Connery, or Sully, as the dad. Either way, it's going to be amazing **– supermarioex**



Join the Play Nation by signing up to our forum at www.play-mag.co.uk/forum

Part of the NowGamer Network

www.imagineshop.co.uk

Sand could take gaming by storm in 2011.

Sand: the water of 2011?

Is the grainy goodness of sand the new frontline of next-gen tech?

It might seem like a rather strange question, but is sand the new battleground for this generation's physics engines? When this generation began it was games such as *BioShock* that really impressed us with its water effects. As time has gone by we have been equally impressed by fire (*Alone In The Dark*) and by wind (the great particle effects of *Killzone 2* for instance), but sand is emerging as an interesting new challenge in some of the PS3's biggest 2011 releases.

UNCHARTED 3: DRAKE'S DECEPTION

One of the few things we can be sure about with Naughty Dog's latest game is that sand will play a major role. It's promising sand in all its wondrous and terrifying forms from the shifting dunes to the storms and mirages we'd expect from a vast desert. It's a genuine new challenge that goes beyond anything we've seen before.

JOURNEY

Another Sony exclusive that will spend much of its time out in the desert, *Journey* will take a different approach to *Uncharted 3*. thatgamecompany has attempted to make the sand move and feel more like an ocean, while simultaneously creating a surface layer of sand that moves realistically and rather hypnotically on top.

SPEC OPS: THE LINE

2K's shooter has yet to fully reveal itself, but we do know that it'll be set in a city seemingly consumed by the desert. With the foundation being so unstable, sand will drag you around and down into holes as it flows and moves naturally. It's an interesting new mechanic that promises to make it one of 2011's most impressive looking shooters.

RAGE

Much of what we've seen of id's game has been in desert-like, post-apocalyptic circumstances. Could id be working on some special sand tech of its own? We really don't know, as we know so little about what *Rage* is going to be offering, but we wouldn't put it past this rather superb developer to blow the competition out of the sand pit.

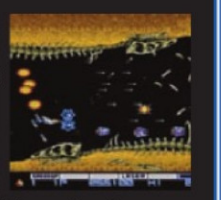
WHAT WE WANT TO SEE

Need? No. Want? Why yes

1 More approaches to updating like *GT5* More like an MMO than a 'normal' game, *GT5* is seeing a flow of updates applied that make genuine changes to the way it is played. We like it, though admittedly it's a method sure to divide opinion.

2 Day-one trials The more we think about it, the more it annoys us. The more we get a few day-one demos, the more we fail to see why *every* game can't get a day-one trial, just like on Xbox Live. *Surely* it's not hard to make it mandatory? It would clearly help sales, as well as making us happy.

3 Emulators And why not? The advent of PS Jailbreak has led to them popping up on PS3, so why not cut out the illegal element and pop them on properly?



4 PS+ 'token system' As suggested by a user on the US PlayStation Blog – users of PS+ could be given a few tokens each month that could be put towards downloading whatever they wanted. Different things would cost different amounts, they could be saved up and used on things other than what Sony dictate users can have. Surely it makes sense?

5 Recettear: An Item Shop's Tale In which you run an item shop in a JRPG world. It is absolutely fluggin' brilliant.

WWWTS news:

Nothing much has budged in the world of PSN recently. PS+ has been chugging along, we've seen a few new trials pop up and a couple more full-game downloads. That's about it.

Vanquish was one of the best games we played in 2010. Check it out.

word on the tweet

davidscottjaffe
"Anyone know the name of the attack that comes out of Iron Man's chest in the Marvel/Capcom games? Need it for reference. Thanks!"

It's called the Unibeam David Jaffe, maker of *Twisted Metal* and *God Of War*.

Platinum Games

Q&A

Vanquish producer Atsushi Inaba talks to us about taking risks with new IP and seeing his old Capcom games revamped in his absence

You've worked on some exciting projects, but do you feel like you have more freedom now at Platinum than you had before?
Yeah, you could say that. At Platinum Games, which is an independent company, I am a producer right now. That means I have a say in what we're going to make and in what sort of direction the company is going. In that respect there is a lot of freedom. But, as always, freedom comes with a responsibility and as an independent company if we screw up on one project we would be in big trouble. Also, since we're not a part of a big publisher, we can't delay the schedule for months and months. In that sense there is always a risk and responsibility, but on the whole I feel a greater level of freedom.

> We have a responsibility to present the IP in a way that it will be easily accepted by the users

Do you feel what you're working on now is as risky as the titles you produced at Clover? Are you looking for safer bets?
No, that's not really our style, to stay away from risk. If you start thinking about avoiding risk then most of the time users will get boring games and that's not what we're about.

How important a part does the sense of humour at Platinum play in the way you make games?
Our staff really enjoy joking around and practical jokes. I always wonder when these guys are making up jokes, because I've got them working to quite a tight schedule particularly for these big titles and yet they somehow find the time to create a new joke to insert in the game. They bring it to me saying, 'I just made this, what do you think?' That's something we definitely share in common in our studio.

Is it strange seeing new versions of games you worked on like *Okami* and *Devil May Cry* get developed without you?
I have mixed feelings seeing these titles being released without me. With any title that I've worked on I've put in so much energy and passion that whatever their concept is and whatever they're trying to do with these existing titles I hope they will put equal energy and passion and commitment into it. That's also a requirement for presenting these in new formats.

Are there any specific titles you've worked on that you're particularly proud of?
I can't pick one, but I'm proud that we've been able to release new franchises and new IP for all the titles we've created. At this time, in this industry, I'm really proud of that achievement.

Do you think gamers are more open to new titles than they were when you were making games with Clover?
As a creator I don't think we should ever put that on the users. We should never say 'they don't understand new IP'. As the creators we have a responsibility to present the IP in a way that it will be understood and easily accepted by the users. Looking back ten years to when I was working with Clover, even then we were saying there weren't many new IPs around, but we want to do something new. So, the situation hasn't changed that much.

Will you continue to push down the route of making new IP or are you open to making some sequels, too?
I'd like to do both. It's not like we're against the idea of a sequel if the users love our IP and we can present something new without breaking the world and image from the existing game then we would definitely like to create a sequel. We would like to do both.

You've worked with some great creators, like Shinji Mikami on *Vanquish*, so if you had a limitless choice what other developers would you like the chance to work with?
If I were to pick one creator from Japan it would be [Yasumi] Matsuno [*Vagrant Story*, *Final Fantasy XII*], who worked on *MadWorld*; he did the scenario writing on that game. I'd love to do something with him and have him do the scenario. And if I were to pick one from abroad it would be the SCEA Studio in Santa Monica who make *God Of War*. They seem to have a similar approach to game making to Platinum so I'd like to work with them.

Inaba worked on the original *Devil May Cry* so wants to see the newest version do the franchise justice.

www.imagineshop.co.uk

One true champ

You have to give credit to Street Fighter says Mortal Kombat producer

Capcom's *Street Fighter* deserves a lot of credit for the rise and recent revival of the beat-'em-up genre according to *Mortal Kombat* creator and exec producer Ed Boon. *Street Fighter II* was released in 1991 and was followed in 1992 by Boon's *Mortal Kombat*.

"You have to credit *Street Fighter* for what it is," he said. "It is the first big fighting game. There was *Karate Champ* before and some less influential fighting games, but *Street Fighter* hit the mass market and in my opinion it influenced every fighting game that followed it."

Now as then, though, *Mortal Kombat* is a very different sort of fighting game from that starring Ryu and Chun-Li, but the influence cannot be denied. "I don't think you could say that *Street Fighter* had no influence on *Mortal Kombat*," he said. "We present our game differently and we're targeting a different player in a lot of ways with the exception of this one where we're targeting the hardcore player. We certainly look at our game as going for a different angle to *Street Fighter*."

One reason *Mortal Kombat* is so unique, of course, is that it was and

You have to credit Street Fighter as it was the first big fighting game

remains one of the only Western-developed beat-'em-up games around, something Boon seems quite proud of. "I've been really impressed with the fact that we've stayed around and been the only Western developer working on a fighting game," he revealed to us.

word on the tweet

TimOfLegend
"One way to tell if your Frank Sinatra hat is not working is if you are not Frank Sinatra"

More cryptic goodness from the mind of Double Fine head honcho Tim Schafer.

Win Dead Space: Aftermath!

10 copies of horror animation up for grabs

EXCITED ABOUT THE return of *Dead Space*? You should be. *Dead Space 2* is out this month and promises to be one of the games of the year. To celebrate this fact a new animated horror film companion has been made by Anchor Bay Entertainment and Manga in association with Film Roman and EA. If you saw the original film then you'll know that the *Dead Space* films are a must-have for fans of the series. To be in with a chance of winning one of ten copies of the film simply complete the following famous phrase...

In space no one can hear you...

A) Whistle
B) Chuckle
C) Scream

To submit your answer, email play@imagine-publishing.co.uk with the subject heading 'Aftermath Comp.' Please include your full name, age and address. The closing date is 16 February 2011 and age restrictions will apply. *Dead Space: Aftermath* is available on Blu-ray and DVD from 24 January 2011.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS All entrants must be 18 or over. To submit your answer, simply email play@imagine-publishing.co.uk with the subject line 'Aftermath Comp.' The closing date for entries is 16 February 2011. Please be aware that answers must be submitted to the above email address only, and any left through the comments section of our website will be disqualified. This competition is open to residents of the United Kingdom and Ireland. Imagine Publishing has the right to substitute the prize for a similar item of equal or higher value. Employees of Imagine Publishing (including freelancers), their relatives, or any agents are not eligible to enter. The editor's decision is final, and no correspondence will be entered into. Prizes cannot be exchanged for cash. Full terms and conditions are available upon request. From time to time, Imagine Publishing or its agents may send you related material or special offers. If you do not want to receive this, please state it clearly on your competition entry.

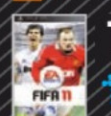
PLAY Charts

Cataloguing everything that's big in the world of PlayStation

PS3 CHART

	1 NEW	**Gran Turismo 5** Sony	The bestselling PS3 exclusive to date and as more patches arrive it's only getting better. **85%**
	2	**Call Of Duty: Black Ops** Activision	*Black Ops* finished 2010 strong and could have kicked off 2011 on top if it weren't for *GT5*. **94%**
	3	**FIFA 11** EA	Expect *FIFA 11* to hold strong in the charts right up to the release of *FIFA 12*. **91%**
	4	**Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood** Ubisoft	A fine new addition from Ubisoft that many will have marked down as their game of 2010. **91%**
	5	**Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit** EA	Proof that Criterion is one of the best racing game developers in the world today. **91%**
	6	**Medal Of Honor** EA	Good to see *MOH* holding on for the time being, but a new *Battlefield* this year will likely hurt it. **86%**
	7 NEW	**Red Dead Redemption: Undead Nightmare** Rockstar	Rockstar's DLC bundle is an odd little package, but one that's proved popular with fans. **87%**
	8	**Fallout: New Vegas** Bethesda	DLC support for *New Vegas* seems likely, but Obsidian has a number of other projects on the boil. **88%**
	9	**Pro Evolution Soccer 2011** Konami	The Christmas period saw *Pro Evo* get a boost in sales, but we don't expect it to last for long. **73%**
	10	**Sports Champions** Sony	Sony will likely be very pleased with this game's re-entry into the chart. **83%**

PSP CHART

	1	**FIFA 11** EA	The late year spending spree has seen this favourite rise up the charts to number one in January. **69%**
	2	**Football Manager 2011** Sega	Even though its developer will tell you this series isn't really evolving on PSP, it's still popular. **NA%**
	3 NEW	**Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4** Warner Bros	A good entry for the *Harry Potter* franchise as that Lego magic continues to work. **NA%**
	4	**God Of War: Ghost Of Sparta** Sony	Kratos toppled by a teenage wizard? We never thought we'd see the day, but here's the proof. **79%**
	5	**WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2011** THQ	It's easy enough to see why this series is going nowhere when it keeps selling like this. **NA%**

*This chart is compiled from sales, our opinions and the games you're playing. If you're playing a recent, quality title that isn't on our chart, head on over to the forum and let us know about it.

AN EMBARRASSMENT OF RICHES

It feels so awkward being this superior

I've been spending a lot of time recently keeping my eyes fixed firmly on the ground, dodging the glares of my friends. They're not happy and I've got no explanation for them. I can feel their disappointment and rage searing into the back of my skull as I walk past. Shivers run up my spine every time I catch a whisper of discontent from their lips. They think I can't hear them, but I can. I know what they're saying and I know that they blame me. I don't know why, though. It's not my fault that the Xbox 360 sucks compared to the PS3 in 2011.

THE XBOX 360 SUCKS COMPARED TO THE PS3 IN 2011

Sometimes being the best is a burden as much as it is a blessing. The weight of expectation alone could be crippling, but this is far more intense. This is the weight of responsibility. The PS3 is now holding up the collective worth of the games industry. While Xbox 360 owners are left to look forward to a year of shoe-horned motion games that leave them three stone lighter, we can happily put on weight for the winter playing some of the best games ever to be bestowed upon the human race. We are the chosen people it would appear and the PlayStation 3 is the Holy Land.

Not sure what I'm on about? Well, clearly you haven't been paying attention to the release schedules. As you read this you'll hopefully be playing, creating and sharing with *LittleBigPlanet 2* and next month you can look forward to *Killzone 3*. *MotorStorm: Apocalypse* is following in March with *SOCOM 4* and *inFamous 2* not far behind. We take a little break for the summer and then suddenly we've got *Twisted Metal* on the horizon, but more importantly we can look forward to *Resistance 3* appearing in September, *Uncharted 3* dropping in November and hopefully somewhere in-between *The Last Guardian* popping its head above the garden fence. And that's without mentioning games like *Yakuza 4* or *Ni No Kuni* for all you Japanophiles out there.

And so I'm forced to face my forlorn friends who cling desperately to the hope that *Gears Of War 3* won't suck. That it might actually have some interesting characters this year that have more than two dimensions and that online won't be broken by such simple things as rolling and using a shotgun. I must smile weakly and tell them that it will all be okay and that they might get lucky and see their console Red Ring again. And when that time comes they'll be more than welcome to come over my pad and watch me play some amazing game in 3D, only I won't be giving them glasses or a pad to play themselves. They made their bed, they can bloody well sleep in it.

LIKING

The big comebacks. From Elder Scrolls to Lara Croft via a little SSX we've seen plenty of old friends make themselves known to us again. 'Hello, do you remember me? You used to think I was top but now you play Call Of Duty all day'. Yes, I do remember you, but where's Modern Warfare 3?

HATING

CGI trailers for games I know there could be actual gameplay for. I mean, what's the big deal? I don't care how amazing you are as a movie director I just want to see what great game makers you are. This CGI rubbish just makes me think you've got something to hide. Give us some real shit.

DISCLAIMER: The Fanboy is a PS3 enthusiast, but his views may never represent those of **Play** or its affiliates.

INSTANT EXPERT

All of the pros with none of the prose

GAMING INNOVATORS
Christopher Weaver founded Bethesda in 1985 where the first videogame physics engine was developed and used by a number of other devs in their games.

BEYOND OBLIVION
ZeniMax isn't a name many would have been familiar with until its subsidiary company Bethesda shot to prominence with its *Elder Scrolls* games, especially *Oblivion*.

FOUNDING FATHERS
ZeniMax was set up as an umbrella company by Bethesda founder Christopher Weaver and lawyer Robert Altman.

ZENIMAX MEDIA

Who?: Videogame publisher • **Established:** 1999

HQ: Rockville, Maryland, USA

RAPID EXPANSION
In the last few months ZeniMax has added two more studios to its ranks. *Resi* creator Shinji Mikami's studio Tango Gameworks was added in October with the promise of a new project.

ANGER MANAGEMENT
In December last year ZeniMax bought back the publishing rights to *Rage* from EA who had done a deal with id Software before it was bought.

DARK EXTRAS
The most recent acquisition by ZeniMax is Machinegames, a Swedish dev formed by some of the most talented members of the Starbreeze team.

FIRST LOOK
Rage will likely be the very first game to be published using the id Tech 5 engine. Previous id Tech engines helped make games such as *Call Of Duty* and *Medal Of Honor*.

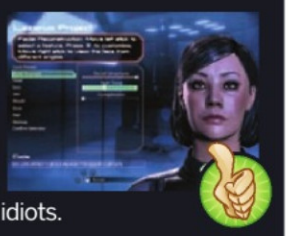
EMBRACING ID
In 2009 ZeniMax bought id Software, creator of such legendary franchises as *Doom*, *Quake* and *Wolfenstein*. It is also the developer behind one of 2011's most anticipated games, *Rage* which showcases the new id Tech 5 engine.

DOS & DON'TS

Important lessons from Play this month

DO: Play, create and share plenty with *LBP 2* otherwise you'll be missing out on so much amazing content and gaming.

DON'T: Start playing *Dead Space 2* unless you've got a clear run to your toilet. You don't want any embarrassing accidents.



DO: Create your own Shepard when playing *Mass Effect 2*. Plenty of Xbox 360 players didn't bother, the idiots.

DON'T: Get your hopes up that *nail'd* is going to fill the hole before the release of *MotorStorm: Apocalypse*. Be patient.

Read our reviews of all these games starting on page 86

PLAY CREATES, SHARES WITH... MASS EFFECT 2

This month's Play creations from the big games on PS3

BARACK OBAMA His star may be waning in the US these days, but that doesn't mean he can't traverse the stars in *Mass Effect*. Now you too can bring truth, justice and the Alliance way to the far and dark reaches of the Milky Way.

JET LI If only Shepard had some hand-to-hand combat skills then Jet Shepard would feel more like the real thing. Alas, he does not, so we'll have to make do with some Biotic abilities. Jet Shepard wouldn't be seen dead using a gun.

SIGOURNEY WEAVER We've gone with a short-haired look in honour of her *Aliens* role where she took on the mantle of arse-cooking mummy type. As Sigourney Shepard she can do much the same.

Read our Mass Effect 2 review on page 92

Made something cool in a game?
Send an image to play@imagine-publishing.co.uk and share it with the world.

The Vault

OBJECTS OF DESIRE

The toys, trinkets and tailoring that has our fires burning this month

Star Wars Series 6 Mimobots

From $24.95 each at Mimoco.com

These highly collectable and desirable USB flash memory drives from Mimoco have been innovating on their Star Wars designs for years now and this new set is as cool as ever.

Moogle Plush

$24.99 at BigBadToyStore.com

These fuzzy and cute little creatures will be familiar to anyone who enjoys the odd Square Enix-published titles having made their debut in *Final Fantasy III* and now seemingly coming to *Final Fantasy XIV*. Definitely worth a look for all you *FF* fans out there then.

Kisai RPM Watch

£128.70 at Tokyoflash.com

Based on a design by a Tokyoflash fan **and then voted on by** the website's **community, this new** watch is something **of a revolution for the** company. Quite **apart from anything** else it's one of the **simpler to read for th**e time, but **it's as stylish as ever.**

Juri Statue

£79.99 at Play.com

It's not hard to see looking around fan sites and just playing *Super Street Fighter IV* online that the most popular new character is Juri. If you're a fan you can show your love with this statue.

God Of War Beanie

$12.99 at BigBad ToyStore.com

Hats can make you look ridiculous. It's a sorry state of affairs, but there you are. What won't look ridiculous, though, is this *God Of War* beanie on your head. Why's that you ask? Well, who's going to laugh at someone who so clearly wears his allegiance to Kratos? They're liable to get their bonce torn off.

MySoti
15% OFF
these great T-shirts
This Month's Code:
PlayGear201

Hog Wild Air Tours Shirt

£20 at InsertCoin Clothing.com

Inspired by the original *Uncharted*, we're a little surprised that we don't see more in the way of Nathan Drake-inspired merchandise. We suppose that with the third game on the way and a movie tie-in, too, that may change, but in the meantime we have humorous and cool stuff like this filling the gap in the market.

Peace Panda

£17.49 at MySoti.com

We all need peace and quiet from time to time and while this shirt can't guarantee the quiet, it can promise peace. At least we think it can.

Fatty Fish

£15.85 at MySoti.com

You shouldn't overfeed a goldfish. They have stomachs only as big as their eyes and the results of overfeeding are not as funny as this shirt is. We wish they were, though.

CONDITIONS: Enter discount code when placing order. MySoti.com discount code only valid on featured items between 20 January and 16 February. Visit MySoti.com for even more great T-shirts.

www.imagineshop.co.uk

Hyperflux Armour Ratchet

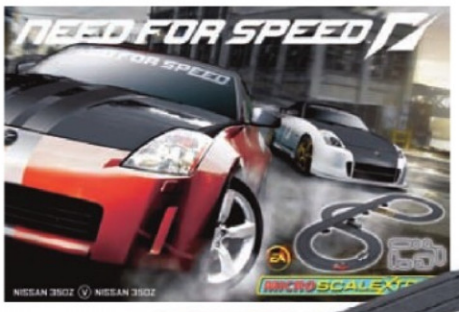
£13.99 at Play.com

The *Ratchet & Clank* action figures are secretly amazing. We say secretly because no one seems to be making a huge fuss about them and yet they superbly capture the brilliance of the game series.

Deluxe Wolverine & Captain America Masks

£14.99 at ForbiddenPlanet.com

These excellent-looking masks are far superior to the typical floppy or spandex made rubbish you so often find with superhero costumes. These things actually have the right shape and all the extra (unrealistic) details from the comics so you can really look like these Marvel heroes.



Space Invaders Rug

£74.99 at PlantationRug.co.uk

A little retro appreciation is the in thing at the moment as gaming becomes more mainstream and items such as this *Space Invaders* rug are likely to be a more common sight in people's homes. We're certainly digging it.

Need For Speed Scalextric

£40 each at Scalextric.com

If you're male, young, old or somewhere in-between, then you probably want a Scalextric set. It's in the genes. And why not mix your obsession with battery-powered racing with your love of gaming and get this *Need For Speed* kit.

STAT ATTACK
32.4 million consoles in the UK

Sackboy Superstar Figures

$4.50 at eStarland.com

This collection of figures is coming this month and while you may be able to find the whole lot in some places, the idea is to pick them up 'blindboxed' not knowing what you're going to get until you've bought it and opened up the packaging. Like a Kinder Egg, but less rubbish.

HIGH FIVE

Five of the best... art books

Okami: Official Complete Works

£29.99 at Waterstones.com

If you thought that *Okami* on PS2 looked beautiful then you haven't seen anything until you've taken a look at some of the art in this book.

The Art Of Uncharted 2

£43.77 at Amazon.co.uk

A great collection, this time from Sony's fantastic *Uncharted* sequel. Seeing how the colourful concept art here translated to the final game is brilliant.

UDON's Art Of Capcom 2

£17.98 at Amazon.co.uk

UDON's art books are renowned for good reason and this second collection of Capcom-inspired artwork is really quite epic.

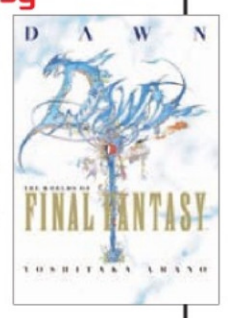
The Art Of God Of War III

£36.87 at Amazon.co.uk

More wonderful art from Sony, this time from Kratos's PS3 outing and what a collection it is. Highly recommended for *God Of War* fans.

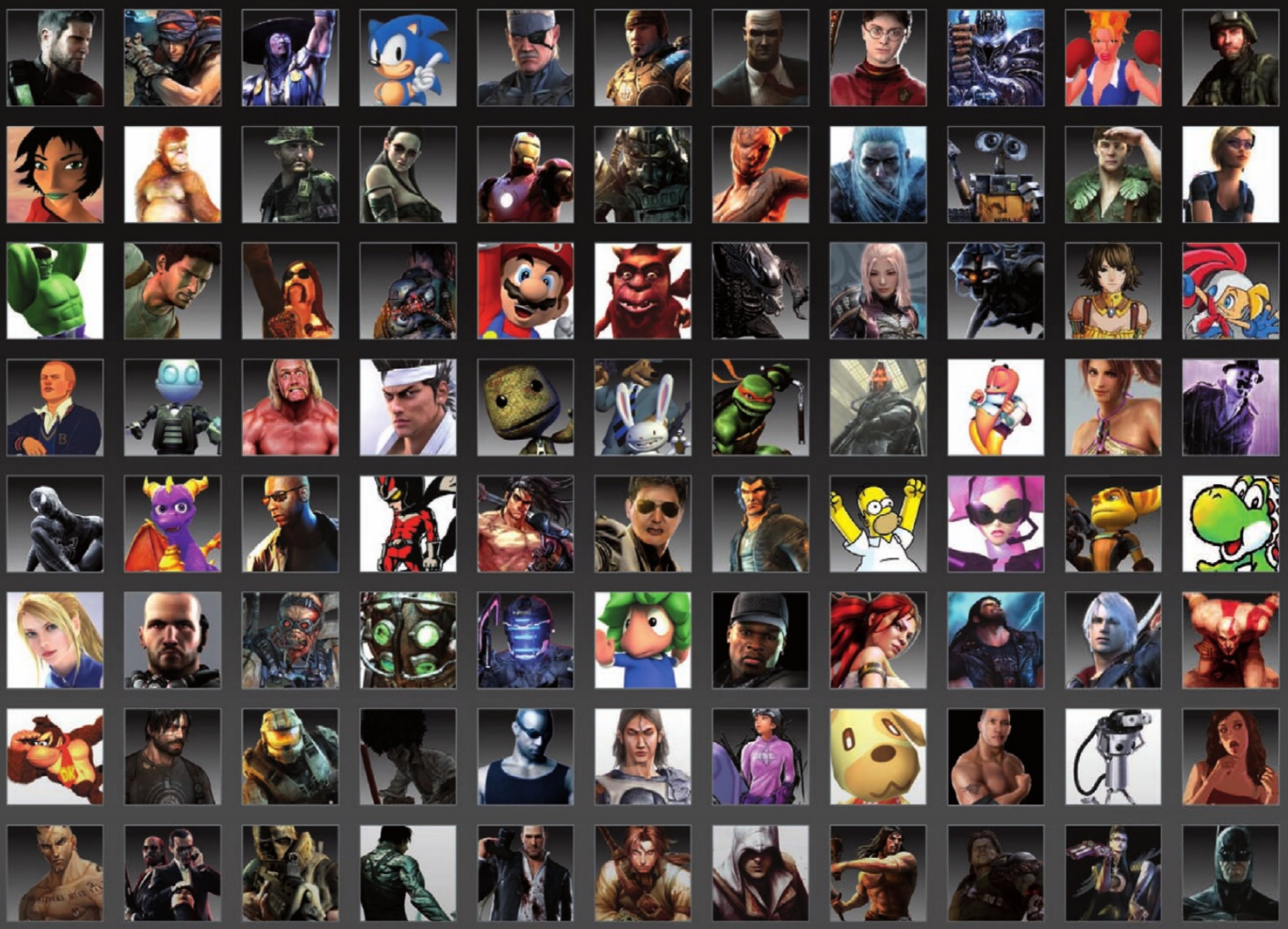
Dawn: The Worlds Of Final Fantasy

£14.83 at Amazon.co.uk



Yoshitaka Amano has been working on *Final Fantasy* since the first game, designing concept art and the logos for each game. Check out his work in this great book.

EVERY FORMAT
EVERY GAME



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AND FINALLY...
Where hype and hyperbole are welcome

AN ADDICTIVE STORY

Gaming comes under fire from mainstream press

THEY SAY: Videogames came under attack last month with particular emphasis on their addictiveness. First the BBC's *Panorama* investigated the addictive nature of videogames suggesting that they exploited brain-washing techniques developed during the Cold War. A number of gaming groups were also contacted by ITV staff representing the Lorraine Kelly TV show looking for participants in an 'investigation' into teenagers who become violent because of gaming.

WE SAY: ITV asked **Play** if we would post their request on our forum. Here's what was said; "The piece is looking at the effects of videogames on children and I am looking for the following to interview – either a teenager or the parents of a teenager whose education or relationships have suffered due to the time they spend on games, or a teenager or the parents of a teenager who has acted aggressively as a suspected result of playing violent games." Not looking for kids whose lives have been enhanced by games or those who have overcome addictions of other sorts thanks to games then? Sigh.

WARNING! 4 OUT 5 IMAGINARY DOCTORS BELIEVE THIS IMAGE IS ADDICTIVE

From the forum

Your thoughts on the Lorraine Kelly invite

I DON'T THINK any of us on the forum let computer games take over our lives, never mind becoming angry towards people because of them. They are just a form of entertainment and are no different to watching a DVD or the TV **– kev schmit**

Sounds biased towards making games in a bad light instead of the good **– rbl007**

I was too busy beating an old lady for money to start reading that **– supermarioex**

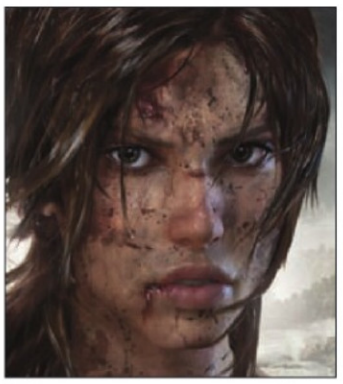
SUITS YOU SIR

Legal matters on the boil

THEY SAY: The music industry and games seem to be at loggerheads once again after a pair of lawsuits were registered by musicians in complaints about videogames. First Axl Rose, the lead singer of Guns N' Roses is suing Activision over the inclusion of Slash in *Guitar Hero III*, despite him no longer being in the band. Going back even further in gaming history, Rockstar also found itself with a suit after Cypress Hill member Michael 'Shagg' Washington claimed that *GTA: San Andreas* character CJ was based on his life and likeness.

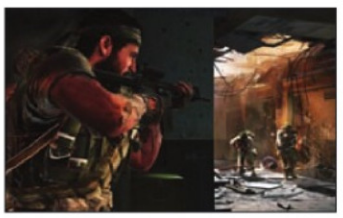
WE SAY: We're not going to get drawn into these cases, but the games company's involved should probably be flattered, as should the rest of the industry. You know you're big business when people start suing you on a regular basis. Rockstar and Activision seem to get a lot of this, but then they are the highest profile companies in gaming. Being that exposed leads to lots of examination. Of course, you only know for sure that you're super-huge when you keep getting sued, but nobody feels the need to talk about it and make it news.

stop please



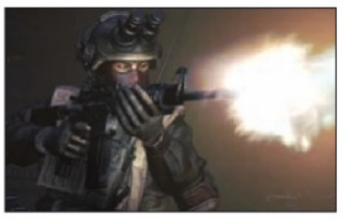
No sex appeal please

THEY SAY: Crystal Dynamics has said it doesn't want to make it's re-imagined Lara Croft a "sex object." It wants Lara to be as attractive because of her personality as her looks.
WE SAY: We always loved Lara for her personality, even when she didn't have one. We're sure it will be the same again now.



Baller blowback

THEY SAY: Activision's Eric Hirshberg has called "controversy" surrounding basketball player Kobe Bryant's appearance in a *Call Of Duty: Black Ops* ad "hypocritical."
WE SAY: He reckons the people complaining are the same who accepted the ad and aired it, taking Activision's money in the bargain.



World peace walker

THEY SAY: A US State Department cable leaked by WikiLeaks has suggested one of Kim Jong-il's sons is, "more interested in videogames," than governing North Korea.
WE SAY: We think the US may have been mocking him, but could this secretly be the answer to world peace? Give world leaders a PS3!

PLAY
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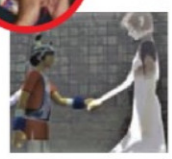
Reload

The very best of the Play Blog this month

Play team top 5s for 2011

Ryan's picks



ICO AND SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS COLLECTION
As I haven't played *SOTC*, explaining why I've picked it is tough. Good job I don't have the space here to do so.

MARVEL VS CAPCOM 3
Providing people don't pick MODOK or Arthur online this will be awesome fun. Remember these words in February when the game comes out.

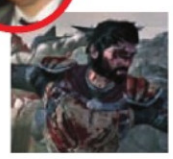
YAKUZA 4
Because we're never going to get *Shenmue III* and this is as close as Sega will ever get to re-creating its sprawling Japanese action-adventure.

BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY
It took me ages to play *AA* despite everyone raving about it and then I was surprised when it turned out to be bloody good. I'm ready for this one.

MASS EFFECT 2
I've already completed it twice on Xbox 360 but I'm going to complete it again on PS3.

http://bit.ly/eIGZA6

Jon's picks



DRAGON AGE II
With all the focus on *Mass Effect 2* on PS3 and the promise of *Mass Effect 3*, *Dragon Age II* has had the spotlight moved off it. It's time to move it back.

DMC: DEVIL MAY CRY
I'm fed up arguing in favour of this game against what seems like the entire gaming public. The doubters should prepare to swallow their words.

NI NO KUNI
All you should care about with this Studio Ghibli game is getting to walk around and interact with a living, breathing Japanese animation.

FROM DUST
The return of the god game? It's odd to think that it ever disappeared but *From Dust* looks very special indeed. Keep an eye on it.

ALICE: MADNESS RETURNS
This return to Wonderland could wind up being the maddest game of 2011.

http://bit.ly/latABA

Ian's picks

BRINK
Brink could redefine online shooters as we know them by taking ideas that have been around for a while and making them SUPER-AMAZINGER.

RAGE
It's made by id. id could do a poop in a bag and say it's nuggets of pure gold and I'd both believe them and love them for it. It'll be ruddy epic.

TWISTED METAL
I think I know everything there is to know about the new *TM* thanks to David Jaffe's insane level of tweeting but I still can't wait.

BULLETSTORM
I've played this, and I've enjoyed this. If it falls flat it's because of something going seriously wrong, because right now *Bulletstorm* is brilliant.

X-COM
It's not on PS3, but those who have had close access have been very positive.

http://bit.ly/gzIBCT

Chris's picks

JOURNEY
I'm extremely excited about *Journey*. I like that Jenova Chen makes games about emotions rather than explosions, and I'm eager to explore it.

CHILD OF EDEN
I'd love to play this with Kinect, but at the end of the day it's the game, the music and the visuals that matter, and I can't wait to experience it.

TOMB RAIDER
It seems that every other *Tomb Raider* game is a reboot these days, but this one sounds like it's really going to play with the concept.

CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE 3
Does this actually exist? I can only imagine so. We don't know what it'd involve, but we've got some ideas.

THE LAST GUARDIAN
There are very few games that excite me as much as Team Ico's *The Last Guardian*.

http://bit.ly/enWYVf

GT5 is ruining reviews for us all

On *GT5*'s release it saw reviews highlighting negative aspects of the game. The online mode wouldn't let you limit entries by BHP or weight, the damage modelling didn't actually affect how cars performed and the standard selection of automovelocitrons didn't look as good as the premium ones.

But soon none of these issues will exist. Polyphony is doing something quite unprecedented in console gaming: bringing major patches to its game beyond its release, and I'm annoyed about this. Why? Well it's rendering all the reviews null and void.

What has the world come to when we review a game, only to find out a week after our deadline goes, or after the words have been committed to the internet, that *GT5* has been improved significantly? Our word is law so how do you think this makes us look when the mistakes we willingly highlight are pasted over soon after splurging our wordy opinions all over the gaming public's grinning faces?

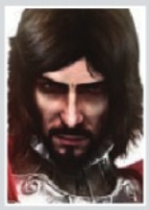
Yamauchi, Polyphony – you have made us look like fools. Worst of all, you have made me look like a fool. I awarded *GT5* a high mark, but now you've made it better so my original high mark looks... well, it doesn't really change the score. But if you keep improving it I might have to request the magazine the review is printed in run a re-review so I can address the new points and re-score the game accordingly.

Actually, no. I can't be bothered with that. Original opinions are the most definitive and we all know that these opinions can never change. NOTHING CAN CHANGE THESE OPINIONS.

http://bit.ly/gl27cQ

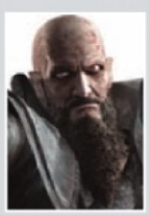
Top 5 villainous beards – and what they mean

THE HUGO STRANGE Appearing in *Arkham City*, Strange's 'under-chin' beard was made famous by Abraham Lincoln, but Strange wears it with more menace. Such a beard says, 'I'm a little kooky, but enjoy something to stroke'.



THE CESARE BORGIA A classic 'Goatee', although we like the pointy finish. This is a good all purpose kind of facial that denotes a man of business while also showing some playfulness. It says, 'I have feelings for my sister and not in a good way'.

THE VIZIER This deceptive beard hides its true nature. Us common folk can see the ill-intent it disguises. However, it still denotes a certain amount of wisdom behind the sinister overtones. It says, 'I'm old, but I could still break your neck'.



THE BITORES MENDEZ This is a darker version of the Vizier, but it has more of a country, hippy feel. This is the kind of beard people will want to snuggle up to for comfort. It says, 'Go on, you know you want to stroke it'.

THE KANE A classic. Not quite what we'd consider a full goatee and yet certainly of that ilk. It's the kind of beard all aspiring global leaders should adopt. It says, 'I care about this much more than you'.

http://bit.ly/ggskCx

Top 5 PS3 exclusives Xbox 360 would like

UNCHARTED 3: DRAKE'S DECEPTION The obvious choice. The first game was arguably the best action-adventure of its ilk since *Tomb Raider* while the sequel lived up to its lofty expectations. So the third game with CO-OP and IN 3D makes me USE UNNECESSARY CAPS to convey the SHEER IMPORTANCE of this exclusive.

INFAMOUS 2 "It's not even possible on Xbox 360! Ha!" is what developer Sucker Punch had to say about a possible Xbox 360 version, give or take a few words. Cole McGrath has returned, the melee system has been redesigned, the open world has been improved and it's going to push the PlayStation 3 further than ever before! Maybe.

LITTLEBIGPLANET 2 Even the beta is incredible, with players stepping up to the plate with their own versions of *Heavy Rain*, *After Burner*, *Street Fighter*, original RPGs and so on. It stands as one of the most innovative titles being released next year and Xbox 360 doesn't have anything that even attempts to match it.

THE LAST GUARDIAN The spiritual successor to *Ico* and *Shadow Of The Colossus*. Those games are frequent mainstays of top ten lists for PS2, so Team Ico's track record means *The Last Guardian* is a game that everyone will be watching closely. It won't sell millions but its real value as an exclusive can be found in its originality.

KILLZONE 3 If Xbox 360 truly is the land of FPS games, then it would be well served by having *Killzone 3* on its side. With no Halo title lined up, *Killzone 3* has the FPS landscape to itself providing it measures up until the usual *Call Of Duty* scrum kicks in towards the backend of 2011.

http://bit.ly/en6AEf

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facebook www.facebook.com/PlayMagazineUK

PLAY TEAM EXPOSED!
Debauched images from our Christmas party

PLAY DISCUSSION
"If FPS games were types of food... **Killzone 3** would be a steak and kidney pie (with mash), **COD** = drive-thru burger, **Bad Company 2** = restaurant burger and **Halo** = pasta in a tomato based sauce."

LIVE UNBOXING!
Play receives Duke Nuke-Ham and booze!

Things you may have missed on our YouTube channel

YouTube www.youtube.com/PlayMagUK

YAKUZA 4 - SAEJIMA TRAILER

MASS EFFECT 3 'EARTH' TRAILER

SSX: DEADLY DESCENTS

X-MEN: DESTINY VGA TRAILER

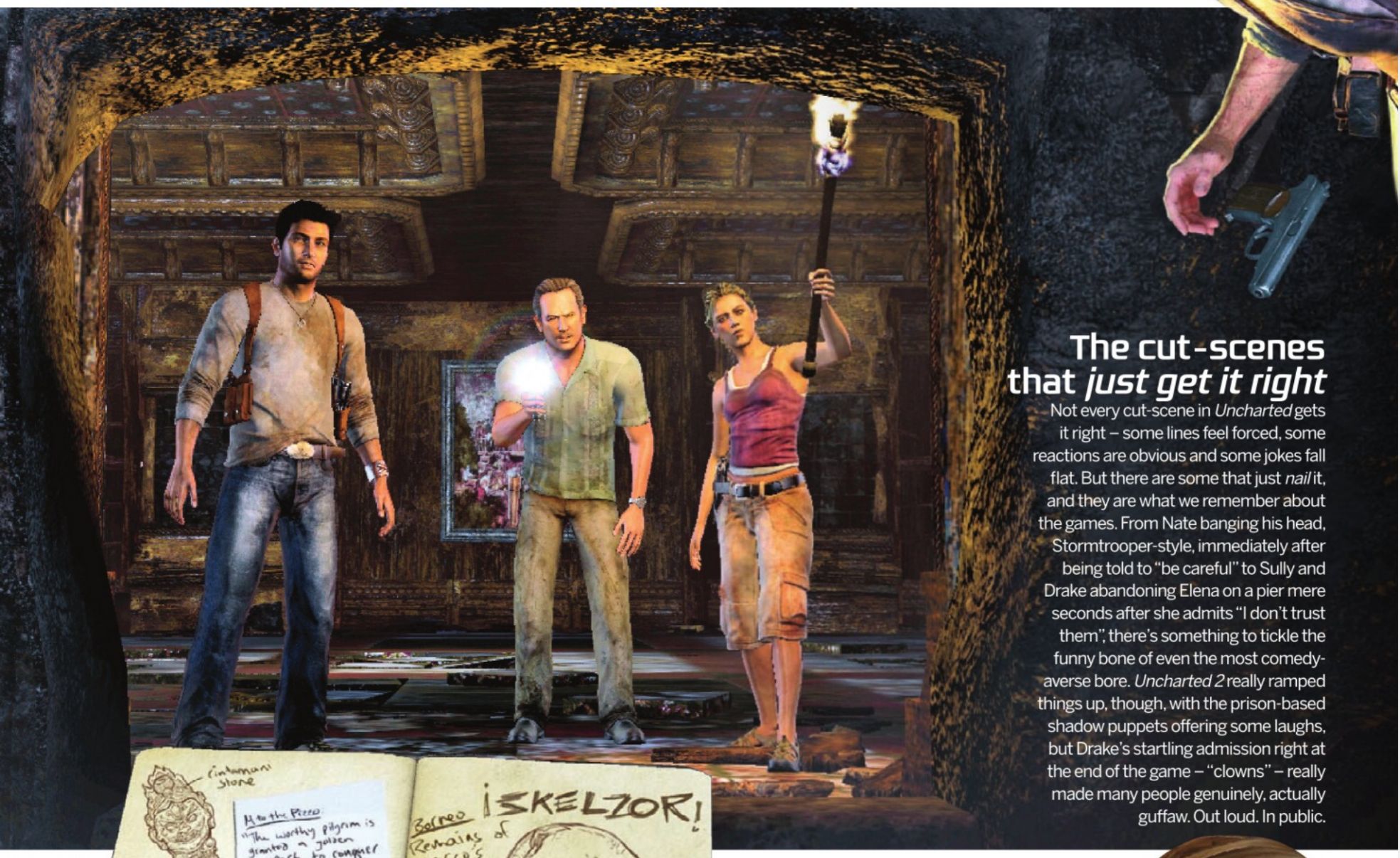
MINDJACK MULTIPLAYER TRAILER

FIGHT NIGHT CHAMPION ROSTER REVEAL

PLAY ♥'s

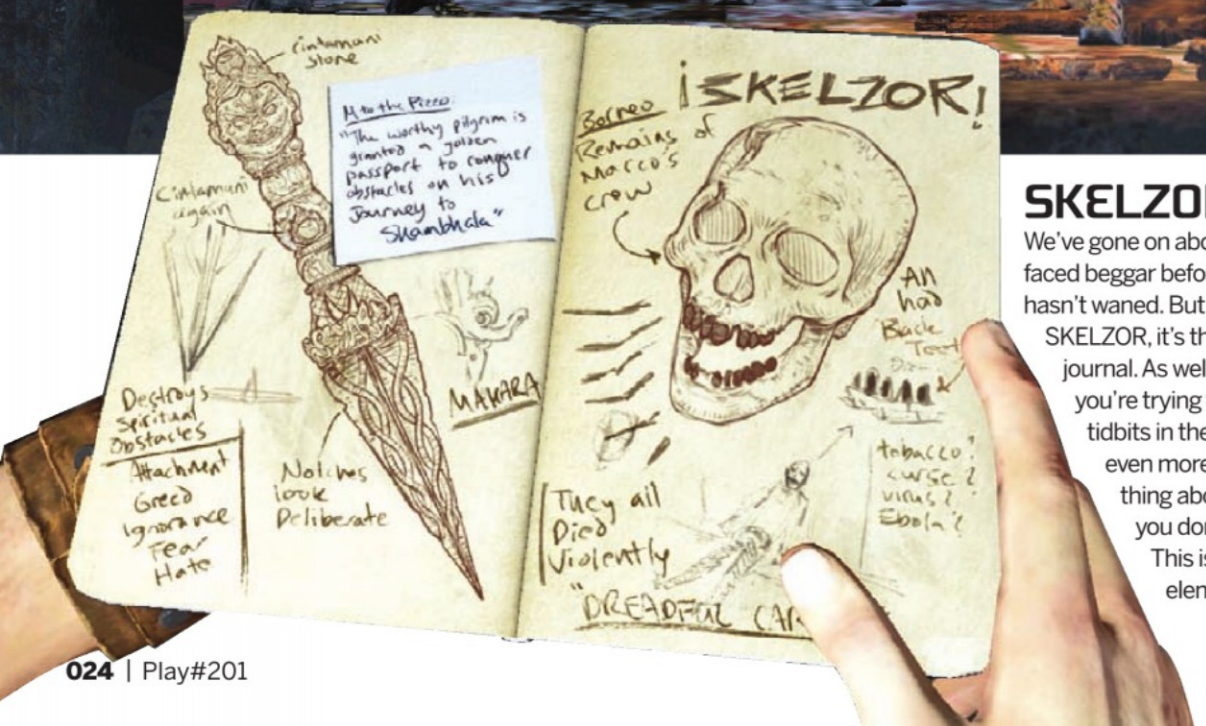
UNCHARTED'S SENSE OF HUMOUR

Uncharted 3! It's here! Well, not quite yet but it's been announced and we have the first details for you later in the mag... but in the meantime, let's remind ourselves how funny the first two are.



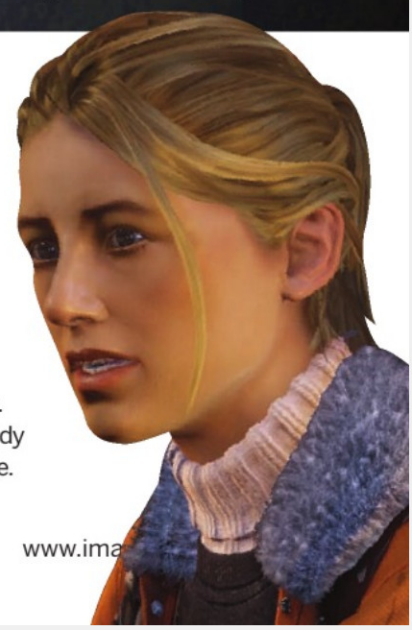
The cut-scenes that *just get it right*

Not every cut-scene in *Uncharted* gets it right – some lines feel forced, some reactions are obvious and some jokes fall flat. But there are some that just *nail* it, and they are what we remember about the games. From Nate banging his head, Stormtrooper-style, immediately after being told to "be careful" to Sully and Drake abandoning Elena on a pier mere seconds after she admits "I don't trust them", there's something to tickle the funny bone of even the most comedy-averse bore. *Uncharted 2* really ramped things up, though, with the prison-based shadow puppets offering some laughs, but Drake's startling admission right at the end of the game – "clowns" – really made many people genuinely, actually guffaw. Out loud. In public.



SKELZOR

We've gone on about our love for the little skull-faced beggar before, and our enthusiasm for him hasn't waned. But this isn't just the comedy of SKELZOR, it's the comedy of the rest of Drake's journal. As well as providing a few smiles while you're trying to figure out puzzles, the little tidbits in the journal help round Drake out even more than he was before. And the best thing about SKELZOR and the journal is if you don't like it you don't have to look at it. This is why we consider it the best comedy element in the *Uncharted* series to date.



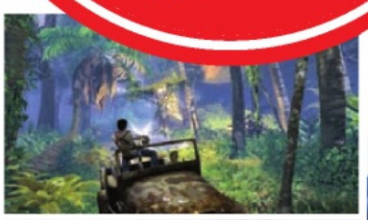
One-liners

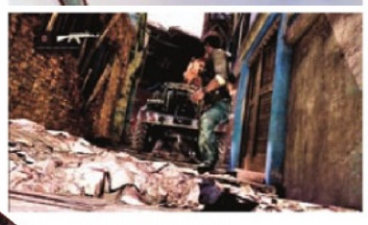
While the cut-scenes offer us the nicely edited, filmic version of *Uncharted*'s finely honed comic missiles, the throwaway one-liners bring us something different. There's no guarantee players will be looking where they're supposed to be looking, or even concentrating on what's being said. It's why Flynn's "there's a guy above you! There's a guy above you!" line is so great – it takes you by surprise. The constant arse-related comments by Drake and "no children for you!" after a kick to the groin made us chortle. The rapport with Tenzin also feels natural, witty and like it *fits*. There's rarely a line out of place while you're in the game, never mind just in the regimented cut-scenes.

WITHOUT THE CHUCKLESOME elements, *Uncharted* would still be a good series. But it's this comedy that brings with it relatability and familiarity, meaning that we don't just *like* the *Uncharted* games – we *love* them. We're comfortable with them; they're warm, welcoming and with a cast of characters we've become accustomed to. Some may be irritated by the wannabe-Joss Whedon-style of writing and some may proclaim the games 'not funny', but... well... "there's a guy below you! There's a guy below you!"

Victor 'Sully' Sullivan

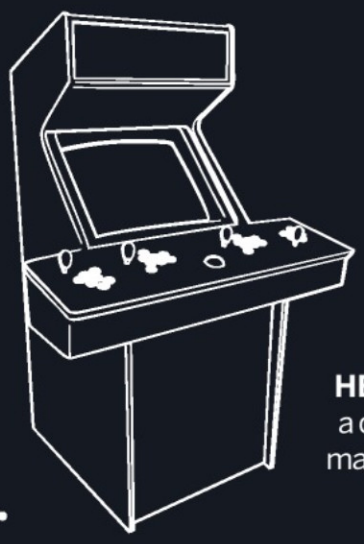
Every good swashbuckling adventure story needs a foul-mouthed, cigar-chomping womaniser to back up the main character. "El goddamn Dorado" has to go down in gaming legend as sheer brilliance, and the exchange between Drake and Sully of "I'm sweatin' like a hooker in church", "you brought a hooker to church?", "...Why not?" still makes us giggle to this day. The perfect antidote to Drake's endless heroics, you're never quite sure if you trust Sullivan, but you always end up believing what he says. It's that winning smile. Or is it a pervy smile?





Oh crap!

It might be indicative of the quality of writing on show when the main character's catchphrase is simply "crap". That's not to say it's a bad thing, as it takes advantage of Nolan North's ability to make the phrase sound like a witty and snappy commentary on whatever situation he's in. Case in point: Nate realises he has to follow his own instructions of "count to five and pull the cord" when parachuting out of a crashing plane. It goes like this: "OH CRAP! ONETWOTHREEFOURFIVE CRAP! CRAP! CRAP! CRAP!" Everywhere the phrase pops up you know it's with good reason, and most of the time it'll make you laugh, too.



THE GAMING REVIVAL

HERE AT PLAY, we think about a lot of things. We think about where we can get lunch for under a quid without doing permanent damage to our intestines. We think about that girl clutching the mags who runs past our desk, wafting perfume everywhere. And then EA announces *SSX: Deadly Descents* and we think – what other games deserve a retro revival?

THE LONGSHOTS

Some games have been left dead for a reason

FEAR EFFECT

Last Seen: *Fear Effect 2: Retro Helix* (2001)
Why: *Fear Effect Inferno* was dropped during cutbacks at publisher Eidos in 2004 and the controversial action series has gone dark ever since.

THEME PARK

Last Seen: *Theme Hospital* (1998/PSN)
Why: Original studio Bullfrog is long gone, while Peter Molyneux moved onto other titles and is currently obsessing with *Fable* on Xbox 360 (boo, etc).

DISCWORLD

Last Seen: *Discworld II: Missing Presumed...!?* (1997)
Why: Once a collaboration of two powers, *Discworld* books aren't as popular as they were and neither are point-and-click games.

EARTHWORM JIM

Last Seen: *Earthworm Jim 3D* (1999)
Why: After an unsuccessful foray into three dimensions, the game's publisher Interplay sold some of its IP to Bethesda, leaving Jim in a legal minefield.

ODDWORLD

Last Seen: *Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath* (2005)
Why: The HD remake is due for PSN but without Lorne Lanning, it's hard to see where a new *Oddworld* title will come from.

COOL BOARDERS

Last Seen: *Cool Boarders 2001* (2000/PSN)
Why: Initially a cult favourite, poor sequels eroded any good will and the return of *SSX* has crushed any potential comeback factor.

THE WISHLIST

If Play could choose, then we'd pick these...

STREETS OF RAGE

Last Seen: *Streets Of Rage 3* (1994)
Why: No one's sure. Side-scrolling beat-'em-ups died with 16-bit consoles. A new *Streets Of Rage* entry was attempted on Dreamcast but new management at Sega of America cancelled it, supposedly unaware of the series' past success.
Comeback Chance: Slim. Sega has rarely talked about the series and other attempts at updating side-scrolling beat-'em-ups for modern consoles have failed.

MICRO MACHINES

Last Seen: *Micro Machines V4* (2006)
Why: The declining quality of the series plus low sales meant *Micro Machines* was finally put on ice after *V4* was met with middling reviews. However, *V4* was played at **Play** towers almost every lunchtime for two years. That's got to count for something. Maybe.
Comeback Chance: Low. Codemasters doesn't have the licence any more and no one else seems bothered to pick it up. PSN comeback, perhaps?

SYPHON FILTER

Last Seen: *Syphon Filter: Combat Ops* (2007)
Why: When *Splinter Cell* exploded on the scene, *Syphon Filter* was the spy series that had to make way. Sony bumped it onto PSP while Sam Fisher's gritty escapades took the plaudits and we've been waiting since 2004 for a 'proper' *Syphon Filter* comeback.
Comeback Chance: High. The series looks like it's faltering and showing weakness. Now is the time for Gabe Logan to strike.

ROAD RASH

Last Seen: *Road Rash 3DO* (1994)
Why: A revolutionary title back with the original *Road Rash*, the mix of bike-racing and combat inspired EA to develop two more sequels that were well received. Even so, *Road Rash 3DO* killed any momentum the series had, as it withered out of public view.
Comeback Chance: Medium. With *Split/Second* and *Burnout* doing the racing genre wonders for cars, it's only a matter of time before someone tries bikes.

TIMESPLITTERS

Last Seen: *TimeSplitters: Future Perfect* (2005)
Why: *TimeSplitters 4* had been in production for over a year when dev Free Radical went into administration. It was bought out by Crytek, who said new *TimeSplitters* is on hold until there is enough demand.
Comeback Chance: Very High. It's a little baffling to think that there isn't enough demand for it already, but it'll definitely make a comeback one day.

SHENMUE

Last Seen: *Shenmue II* (2003)
Why: The notorious story is that *Shenmue* was so expensive to make, Sega needed every Dreamcast owner to buy it twice to make the money back. The sequel also financially crippled Sega. Yet as only two games in a planned four-game outing, the series is only half complete...
Comeback Chance: Very Low. Sega has moved far, far away from *Shenmue* and stays on safe ground financially these days.

BLACK

Last Seen: *Black* (2006)
Why: Stuart Black, the driving force behind... Black, cooked up one of the premier FPS games of the PlayStation 2 era, then decided he didn't want to do a sequel. It's a large shadow for someone else to live under, hence the lack of sequels.
Comeback Chance: Very Low. Without Stuart Black on board, it's difficult to see it happening and, even if it did, we doubt it would be very good without him.

POINT BLANK

Last Seen: *Point Blank* (1998)
Why: It began life in arcades in 1994. People played it. They loved it. Namco realised it would sell and ported it to PlayStation. Even more people loved it. Stories about shooting leaves spread. People demanded more. Namco declined and hasn't made one since.
Comeback Chance: Who knows? Namco Bandai is one of the least predictable publishers and could bring it back at a moment's notice.

PANZER DRAGOON

Last Seen: *Panzer Dragoon Orta* (2004)
Why: The rail shooter began back in the days of Sega Saturn and ended with the gorgeous *Orta* on Xbox. Yet Sega never had much faith in the series, despite its rave reviews – the initial run in America for *Panzer Dragoon Saga*, the third in the series and arguably the best, was a miserable 6,000 copies.
Comeback Chance: Very Low. Sega hasn't mentioned this series since *Orta* and it's traditionally been a low seller.

THE COMEBACKS

Publishers were way ahead of us here...

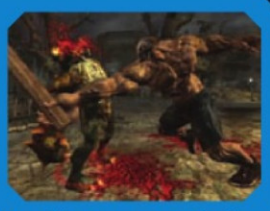
SSX: DEADLY DESCENTS

Released: TBA
Success: Not yet known. The series has been dormant on the big consoles since *SSX On Tour* and our only real clue to the new outing is a mysterious trailer. The lack of colour, life and Run DMC shouting about how tricky it is to rock rhymes has made fans worried.

STREET FIGHTER IV

Released: February 2009
Success: Definitely. It had been ten years since *Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike*, so the pressure was on for Capcom to deliver. By simplifying the gameplay while injecting life via the bright characters and Ultras, it found a whole new audience which led to *Super Street Fighter IV*.

SPLATTERHOUSE



Released: November 2010
Success: Nope. It limped to a 58% score in the last issue of **Play** and struggled to limp anywhere significant in the charts. We don't know exactly where. We just know that no one we know bought it and that's all the evidence we need of its colossal failure to impress.

BIONIC COMMANDO

Released: May 2009
Success: Nope. As bad as *Splatterhouse* was, *Bionic Commando* actually killed its unfortunately named studio Grin. With complicated controls, an awful demo and an instantly loathsome lead character, its first month on sale in the US saw a grand total of... 27,000 copies sold. Oh.

SEGA RALLY REVO

Released: September 2007
Success: Sort of. It was a brilliant game that picked up where the arcade versions left off to stellar reviews. Sales wise, it was a different story. No one seemed to care as it withered and died at retail. More tellingly, Sega hasn't made any noise about revisiting the series since.

OUTRUN ONLINE ARCADE

Released: April 2009
Success: Some. It sold fairly well and tickled reviewers in the right places but even so, it might not have been the success Sega anticipated, as the release of *OutRun* on PS2 and Xbox prior dulled its impact. Even so, it wouldn't be a surprise for Sega to revisit this.

The inside scoop on everything PlayStation

How PlayStation Move works

Sony's answer to the Nintendo Wii is bringing a whole new experience to PlayStation gaming

PlayStation Move's main goal is to offer interactive gaming without the need to use a wired controller, and it achieves this with the help of a series of sensors to ensure that movement and positioning are detected.

When more than one controller is used at the same time, each Orb – the light at the end of the Move controller – is assigned a different colour by the system to avoid overlapping, and up to four controllers can be used in any game. Haptic technology is used to vibrate the Move in specific circumstances and the Orb's light can also offer visual feedback by changing colour to simulate, for example, a gun shot. The PS Eye webcam detects the Move and is used as the receptor while the multitude of sensors within the controller itself provide all the data needed to ensure quick detection of movement and rotation.

The PS3 microprocessor handles the Move's image processing and this uses a small amount of memory not used with a standard controller – approximately 1.2 megabytes. Bluetooth 2.0 is the primary technology between the Move and the PlayStation 3 and this power-efficient radio technology can communicate at up to 2.1 megabits per second in a range up to 30 metres. Finally, the classic PlayStation △, ○, ✕ and □ buttons are included on the Move should you wish to try old-school gaming for a while.

> Bluetooth 2.0 is the primary technology between Move and the PlayStation 3

The PlayStation Eye

THE PLAYSTATION EYE camera is used to track the movements of the Move. It is, in effect, a webcam device with an adjustable fixed-focus zoom lens that can use the Orb to sense its exact position at any time. It uses larger sensor pixels for enhanced use in low-light conditions and can also be used to capture standard video at 320 x 240 pixels using just the illumination from a TV set.

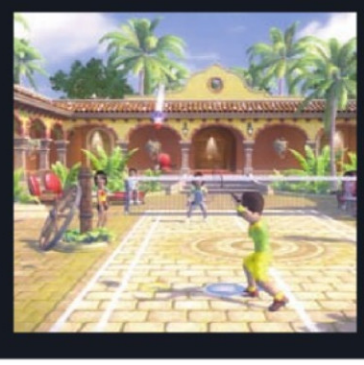
Move gaming

It's a warzone out there! It's not really. It's the same as it always was, just with more Move games to choose from. Which isn't what warzones are like at all. Still, it can be confusing (perhaps), so here's a long boxout to help you choose!

Best Move game

Sports Champions

"'Is this just *Wii Sports* on PS3 then?' they all asked. It surprised them all to hear the word 'No.'" So read Ian's original review of *Sports Champions* before we told him about things like word counts and filling out blank pages.

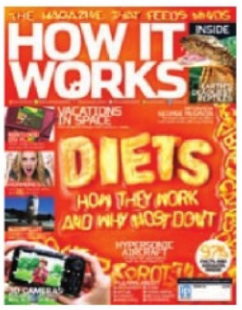


Worst Move game

Racket Sports

Oh god. Every now and then we review a game that the office crowd round, laugh at, then disperse as we write the soul-crushing review and hope it's never seen again. Then we do boxouts like 'Worst Move Game' so have to write about them again and do a little sick in our mouths.

www.imagineshop.co.uk



HOW IT WORKS
Issue 16
Out now

The Move teardown

Inside Sony's newest tech

Head-to-Head

Move Released on 15 September, PlayStation Move is a controller wand fitted with inertial sensors that, in conjunction with a camera, allows for motion control.

Wii Remote First off the mark in 2006 was the Wii. The Wiimote allows for motion-detected gaming through use of an accelerometer and optical sensor technology.

Kinect A completely controller-free system, Xbox Kinect uses a camera, depth sensor and multi-array microphone to provide full-body motion capture.

1. Buttons
The classic Sony PlayStation buttons remain if you feel like a more traditional wireless gaming experience. They are small, though.

2. The Orb
The Orb looks like it is made of glass, but is in fact made of vinyl. Within it are three LEDs, which make the Orb glow in different colours.

3. LEDs
The LEDs allow the Orb to glow in different colours and this in turn enables the PlayStation to recognise the Move at all times.

4. Battery
The 1,320 mAh rechargeable battery offers a maximum playing time of ten hours on one charge and is slightly larger than a typical AA battery.

5. Vibration
The vibrator motor packs a surprising amount of feel considering its diminutive size. It's wired to the motherboard by two thin wires.

6. The power
The processor is an ARM-based 32-bit MCU unit that is surprisingly powerful when you consider its size.

7. The motherboard
This dominates the interior of the controller and soldered to it are the LEDs, vibrator motor, charge contacts and various external cables.

8. Safety first
The wrist strap is a simple but vital part of PlayStation Move. It may just save your TV from a premature death.

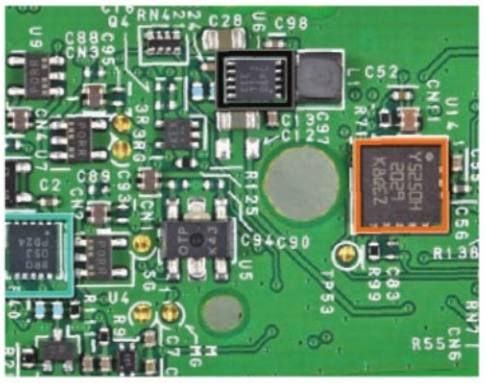
Learn more

For more info and images of the exposed PlayStation Move, visit the gadget surgeons at ifixit.com who kindly contributed the photos and findings for this article.

iFixit

The sensors

The controller has two sensors that detect rotation and motion. The accelerometer uses a cantilever beam to detect movement relative to the Earth: as the beam moves it then sends out the appropriate signal. The rate sensor measures angular movement by using a ring filled with an electrolyte to detect when the controller is rotated around its axis – as the electrolyte moves it can detect what is happening. A magnetometer helps to compensate for the effect of local conditions like magnetism and auroral activity.



The Orb

The technology behind the Orb is simple: the PlayStation Eye detects the colours in the user environment and selects a colour for the Orb to glow, which allows it to be distinguished from the background. It then works out how far the Orb is from the Eye by gauging the spherical shape in comparison to the known size of the Orb. These two tricks ensure that Move works with minimal delay, otherwise known as processor latency.

The Eye and Orb work together in harmony

Best upcoming Move game

Killzone 3

It's not a Move-dedicated title but... whatever. *Killzone 2* was the flagship title for Sixaxis interactivity within a big game (even if it didn't quite work out like that) and *Killzone 3* is looking to fill that role for Move. Will it succeed? Keep buying **Play** to find out!

Most exhausting Move game

Michael Jackson: The Experience

It's not been released yet but given the only dancefloor move we know is Looking Grumpy By The Bar, the dance moves will almost certainly pound our heart into a mushy, miserable pulp.

Weirdest Move game

Kung Fu Rider

You ride an office chair through a city road dodging obstacles. What else to say? All we do on ours is wonder which one of the levers adjusts the height, give up pressing levers that don't seem to do anything and then making a weird yelp when our chair suddenly collapses half a metre seconds later.

5 THINGS WE'D LIKE TO SEE FROM MODERN WARFARE 3

...SHOULD SUCH A sequel even exist. But come on, let's be serious. This is a billion dollar series we're talking about. If the remnants of the team at Infinity Ward aren't hard at work on *MW3* then we'll eat our shoes.

1 STAY GROUNDED

There was a time when the *Call Of Duty* games barely bothered with story and instead rooted their narrative in history – now they're all about conspiracies, counter-conspiracies and imaginary sidekicks. We'd love to see a story that kept things simple. *Call Of Duty 4* managed it, and from a narrative standpoint it remains the best in the series thus far.

2 AN INTRIGUING SETTING

We've seen WWII, we've seen Vietnam, we've seen Afghanistan – we'd love to see something new. We're not suggesting Infinity Ward sets the next *COD* game in space or in a real contemporary battlefield, but it would be interesting to see the dev move outside its comfort zone and deliver an environment that's less familiar to the FPS.

3 NEW MULTIPLAYER MODES

We don't have a problem with the multiplayer modes on offer in *Black Ops*, but a few new additions wouldn't go amiss. A Rush mode as in *Bad Company* would be a great addition, as would a Warzone mode à la *Killzone*. Also, we'd like a few more Hardcore alternatives; we're dying to play a Hardcore version of Headquarters.

4 A COMPLETE LACK OF LAG

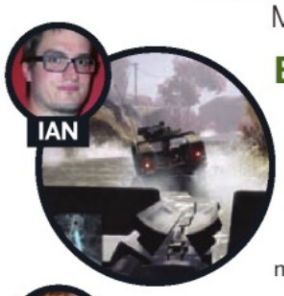
Lag is a bit of a problem in *Black Ops* – the amount of times we've thumped several bullets into an enemy only to have them gun us down in one shot is ridiculous. The Kill Cam shows just how great the discrepancy between players' connections can be. With *Modern Warfare 3*, IW needs to find a way to narrow this gap.

5 GENUINE INNOVATION

As far as multiplayer is concerned *COD* is one of the most innovative FPSs going, but with regards to single-player we've seen little change over the past few years. We want something genuinely new – not just bigger explosions or shocking airport sections – something that makes the single-player as important as the multiplayer.

TEAM PICKS

The other improvements the Play team would like to see in Modern Warfare 3

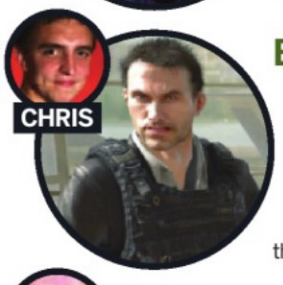


BATTLEFIELD

Personally, I would like to see a *Battlefield* game in *Modern Warfare 3*. Failing that, I'll just play *Battlefield 3* instead, as it's the better series. At least, in my humble opinion.

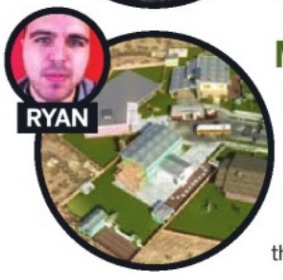
VAMPIRES

What *MW3* really needs is vampires. Zombies are last year's (and every other year's) idea. Bring on the bloodsuckers and let's see how they like being shot by Barack Obama.



BADDIES

I'd like to see a plot that answers the question 'why is the bad guy doing this'. Usually we just get characters who are Russian that want to unleash gas or invade the US for no reason.



MAPS

Don't put the Nuketown map in it. I accidentally typed that as Puketown originally! Ha! That says it all. (It doesn't really. But seriously, no Nuketown this time.)

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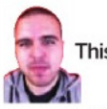
RE:PLAY

This month you're talking about awards, jobs, 360 screenshots and Black Ops Easter eggs. Plus, win a free game for drawing an awesome picture of Ian...



This month's letters answered by: Ryan King, Dolphin ambassador

I don't know where Jon has gone. Chris has got his headphones on. I would ask Ian but he'll snarl and mumble something about me annoying him. Dan will pretend he can't hear me if I ask and Ali is busy colouring things in. So process of elimination means that it's up to me to do the letters this month! Sigh.

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★STAR letter

ABOVE AVERAGE

I was just reading through your latest issue (very nice if I may say so), and I just thought of a few things that might improve the reviewing information. As you are partnered with NowGamer.com, I just thought that it may be quite good to include some of their awards for games, like on the website. Although most people just flick to the score, I, along with other people, would love to see just little badges if the game excels in say technical, fun or Game Of The Year standard. Your reviewing is still perfect, but I thought that maybe you wanted to hear something if you wanted to change it up. Thanks guys, and I will be continuing with **Play** as I got a subscription, woo!
James Ward, Surrey

What improvements would you like to see in the mag?

This letter starts off well and then offers genuine criticism on the magazine, a novel technique once displayed by Stuart, Hammersmith, winner of three star letters in his time. Unfortunately the letter then starts talking about rival mags and it's always a bad move because we have to go in and delete it, when we'd rather copy and paste the whole thing to save time. Luckily for James, a weak month means he wins the star letter award thanks to a strong finish with the subscription knockout blow, bringing his letter score up to a respectable 7/10.

Moving on up

I write to you as a keen reader and subscriber of your **Play** magazine. My name is Jake, I'm 19 years old and my passion is gaming. My ambition in life is to get into the games industry as either a level designer or a games designer. I find it very difficult to actually find any information regarding the games industry, like what aid there is to help me on this chosen career path. I would really love it if in a future issue of **Play** there was a whole article of information regarding getting into the games industry, useful sites, universities that stand out to developers and so on. I know that this mail isn't the most formal you will have read, but a reply from you would be very much appreciated. Thank you for taking the time to read this if you do so.
Jake Parrott, via email

Is this how your game would look? Because it's been done.

Not sure if we'll do a full-blown feature but the trick is to get contacts and work experience under your belt. If you want to get into games design, the easiest way if you don't have a track record is via games testing. Don't worry too much about what university or specific course you choose, just make sure you get more work experience than anyone else.

Sometimes it's necessary for us to use press shots taken on a 360. Sorry.

Oh noes

In issue 198 there are some screenshots of *Black Ops* and a description about the different types of wager matches. But what I couldn't help noticing was that they were from an Xbox 360! You might be wondering how I could tell this but there is a way, in the bottom right-hand corner of the screen it shows the D-pad of the controller telling you if you have any killstreaks available, on the PS3 it shows the PS3 D-pad (four separate arrows) but if the screenshot has been taken from an Xbox then it will have the Xbox D-pad (a single piece cross-shaped button) and on the screenshots showed they were clearly from an Xbox. When I first saw these I felt a little cheated on. You're a PlayStation magazine and one of the most

Write in, and win! Every full-length letter we print receives a free game, courtesy of Deep Silver. For each letter we included this month, the sender wins a copy of nail'd which is out now on the PlayStation 3 (£39.99).

DRAW IAN DRANSFIELD

Can you re-create this monstrosity?

Draw and win!

It seems you lot like to send in pictures. So here's a challenge for you. Draw Ian Dransfield. We'll feature your entries on this page and the winner will receive a copy of *nail'd*. Send the image and the image alone (no text apart from your address on the back) to the usual address. And no tracing please.

important things to do is show screenshots from a PlayStation 3.
Alex Carr, Fulford

It was probably a press shot. Why 'probably'? Because we tried finding the offending screenshot in issue 198, and by that we mean flicking through the mag twice and giving up because Dan offered biscuits round and we didn't want to miss out. So yeah. Give us the page number next time as well.

Secret stuff

My brother and I were playing *Black Ops* Zombies on the new Five map, when the phone at the far left of the room (where you begin) started to ring. I pressed ▢ knowing that previous Zombies Easter eggs responded to this, making the phone buzz.

Further on throughout the map we find the box and a similar phone (after going up the elevator into the Laboratory), hidden in a small room. Hmmm, I thought. Moving up to this small phone on the desk, it starts to ring, too. Pressing ▢ on my controller it makes the same low frequency tone I heard the first time. After a couple of rounds shooting zombies and chasing mysterious scientists, we enter one of the red number portals which takes us to the President's room which was described in the campaign as "not used very often." In the corner of the room, on a similar wooden desk sits a third phone. For the third time I press ▢ and behold! The music from the end of campaign credits *Won't Back Down* by Pink and Eminem starts playing! I thought this would be interesting to fellow *Black Ops* players and readers of **Play** magazine and hope that this hasn't been discovered already!
Alice and Alexander Hare, Bottesford

We remember when a friend of ours told us about a 'secret' in *Oblivion* where if you rested, you get all your energy back. He thought it was a glitch, not a feature of the game. "Hoho!" we laughed. "It's a feature of the game, not a glitch!" It's been three years since we last spoke to him. Sigh.

F.Y.I.

Would you be able to forward me a copy of **Play**'s media kit or just some readership demographics on age, sex, race, etc?
Madalyn Meldrim, email
No.

Do you wanna see this funny video with stripped guy?
Vinson, email
No.

Do you know when the next *Call Of Duty* game is coming out?
Stuart Harvard, Chester
No.

And with that in mind, *Fallout 3* is better than *Fallout: New Vegas*.
Potatomasher, email
No.

Because Wii sold so many I don't think Move will be a huge success, people who want those kind of games already have the console they need.
Marta Jasiczak, Croydon
No. I mean yes! I mean no. Erm, what? Move's success will be independent of Wii. Depends on the games. Innit.

I disagree with your list of 200 Greatest PlayStation Moments and have submitted my own.
Chris Richards, Wakefield
Except, you didn't. Doh.

THIS MONTH, YOU'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT...

PLAY go PLAY the forum... — The official Play and GoPlay magazine forum
The home of the UK's longest running and best PlayStation magazine
FAQ Search Memberlist Usergroups
Profile You have no new messages Log out [Tim]

Choice topics from the Play forum.
Join the discussion at **www.play-mag.co.uk**

SUBJECT: HEADLINES

Topic: Lorraine Kelly Needs Your Help!
I could imagine loads of nerds just emailing her abuse
kev schmit

SUBJECT: OFF-TOPIC

Topic: lolwut
Pfft this new editor isn't as fast, he needs some upgrades *gets out toolbox and gets ready to insert his RAM*
Mr healey

SUBJECT: GENERAL GAMING

Topic: 2011 – What Games Are You Excited About?
LA Noire and *Rage* look promising, and don't forget the wait will be over for the new *Duke Nukem*, gaming's very own Chinese Democracy.
mr.magoo-12

Have you found any cool secrets in *Black Ops*?

The BURNING issues

The stuff we want to hear about!

1. What kind of career in games would you choose if you had to decide?
2. What do you want to see from *Uncharted 3* that might not necessarily make it in?
3. What exactly does Lorraine Kelly have against videogames?

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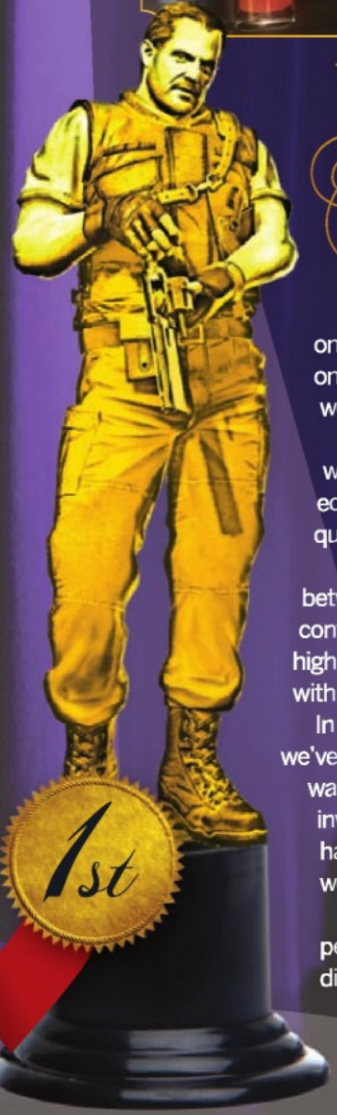
The Burton Awards

Is there any award more prestigious than a Burton? Well, yes. Obviously. But let's pretend there aren't as we celebrate 2010's best games!



The Burton For Being The Best Game Of The Year

Heavy Rain

Play 189, 94%

AFTER GREAT DELIBERATION and consideration there could be only one winner. Of all the games released in 2010 there was only one that really felt like it was breaking down barriers. There was only one that made us feel like we were witnessing history in the making as we played it. Quantic Dream's *Heavy Rain* is a masterpiece.

It felt like an odd choice for game of the year at first. It's not what we'd think of as traditional game of the year material. It's perhaps too edgy. Too challenging. Too brainy. Not gamey enough. But it's all those qualities that made it so unique and made it only possible on the PS3.

In terms of gameplay it should be held up as the perfect balance between storytelling and interactivity. Its use of simple gestures contrasted with violent motion controller moments during periods of high tension made us feel at the heart of the game. Our pulses raced with each new life-threatening fight or challenge from the Origami Killer.

In terms of story and character *Heavy Rain* was above anything we've seen before. The tale of a father desperately trying to save his son was one of the most emotionally charged we've experienced. The investigations of Madison Paige, Scott Shelby and Norman Jayden had their own moments of high drama and each felt like a genuinely well-rounded and believable character.

And ultimately each experience of *Heavy Rain* was unique. Each person who played it put something of themselves into it. They made different choices and got many different endings. There was much debate as to whether *Heavy Rain* had replayability, but your first playthrough was yours alone. That was your version of *Heavy Rain*. Few games have ever felt so personal.

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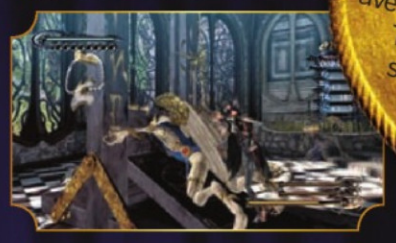


THE AVERAGE

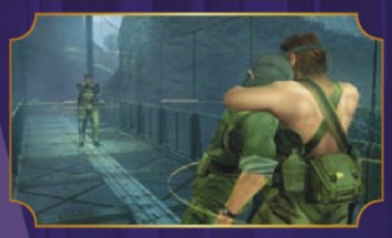
After crunching 2010's review scores in **Play**, we discovered two things. First, that maths doesn't get easier with age. Second, the average review score was 73.4%. The only game to get that score was *PES 2011*. Well done *PES*! Sort of.

The Burton For Being Nearly The Best

Bayonetta

Play 187, 93%

IT MAY SEEM strange to see *Bayonetta* appear as one of our top-**three games of** 2010, as it feels like it came out yonks ago. In truth it arrived in the **UK at the start of** 2010. How impressive, then, for it to make second spot. Hundreds **of games came** out after and had the chance to better it, but only *Heavy Rain* man**aged the feat. Try** playing another action-adventure immediately after sampling the **balletic ballistics of** Platinum's title; they just don't compare. What other game lets you **breakdance while** you fire shotguns with your feet? In what other game do you do ba**ttle with gigantic** angel babies? And what other games soundtrack their violence to **a chirpy remix** of *Fly Me To The Moon*? The answer to each is the very reason why *Bayonetta* remains one of our favourite games of 2010. It's completely unique, **ploughing its** own furrow in a world of me-too copycats, balancing its distinctive **aesthetic** with the tightest action-adventure gameplay we've sampled. **Platinum** Games knows how to craft a great videogame. It's as simple **as that.**



The Burton For Being Easily The Best PSP Game And Third Best Overall

Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker

Play 193, 92%

WE HONESTLY DIDN'T expect to be seeing a PSP game in the running for game of the year 12 months ago. We knew about *Peace Walker* and were excited, but recent memories cried out about *Portable Ops* – good, but not amazing – and *Acid* – a bit too offbeat to be great. We expected the next instalment in Hideo Kojima's sneaking, Snakeing series to be a fun, if ultimately dismissible, experience.

How wrong we were. *Peace Walker* isn't just one of the best games in the *Metal Gear Solid* series, or one of the best games on PSP – it's one of the *best games*. No "of...", no "in..." and no other caveats. It's a full-bodied experience that can eat up hundreds of hours. It keeps on giving, the wealth of content putting to shame most console titles. It continues the story of Big Boss in a way we didn't expect, and in a way that thoroughly impresses.

The PSP may have entered an inescapable downward spiral over the last year, but *Peace Walker* will undoubtedly go down as a shining example of what could have – and what *should* have – been done on the console. Utterly fantastic.

The Burton For Being A Good Game Falling On Deaf Ears Which Will Single Handedly Manage To Destroy The Future Of Videogames By Consigning Us All To A World Where No Risks Are Taken As They Would Be Deemed Too Dangerous Or Unprofitable

Enslaved: Odyssey To The West

THERE REALLY ISN'T much to add beyond the title of the award, truth be told. But let's explain a bit more: the failure at retail by *Enslaved* means we are less likely to see risks taken on future games. This isn't worst-case, this is simple economics. For this accidental contribution to gaming, *Enslaved* bags itself a Burton.

Runner-up: VANQUISH

The Burton For Alliteration

Critter Crunch

CRITTER CRUNCH IS a classy caper pertaining to perplexing puzzles. A greedy, gigglesome gobbler named Biggs blasts his way through bugs busily. It's charming, cheery and chock-full of mind-melting, maniacal madness. Rarely requiring reactions deemed nonsensical or negative, the game gets grateful gasps and rousing renditions of ridiculous happiness, heralding heuristic success on a non-simplified scale. *Critter Crunch* clearly deserves deep deference, hence bestowing Burtons' best upon it. Plus it totally tweaks our alliterative tendencies.

Runner-up: FINAL FANTASY XIII

The Burton For Tweaking Your Camber By Two Degrees

Gran Turismo 5

ANYONE WHO HAS put a lot of time into racing sims will know the joy that comes with making minor adjustments. You tweak here, you tweak there and suddenly you've shaved 0.023 seconds off your best lap time. This is why there could have been no other winner for this Burton, *Gran Turismo 5* offering as it does a wealth of tweaking and tuning options to keep us bizarrely occupied for months to come.

Runner-up: F1 2010

The Burton For Ian Dransfield's Face

3D Dot Game Heroes

THERE IS ONE thing in this world – an act carried out by so many, yet talked about by so few. On loading up a game with a character creation tool, they will create themselves – and what is what is better than that? Why, creating superstar **Play** staff writer Ian Dransfield. This has happened dozens of times across dozens of games, but the title that gave us the most joy, in the shape of Ian's massive head, was *3D Dot Game Heroes*.

Runner-up: WWE SMACKDOWN VS RAW 2011

The Burton For Keeping Bad Religion In Royalties

Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit

HOT PURSUIT DID a lot of things right and this includes the soundtrack. While most of it is pap, they at least elected to put some money in the pockets of those that deserve it by featuring a track by legendary punk band Bad Religion. For this reason, we're proud to offer up this fantastic, life-changing award to *Hot Pursuit*.

Runner-up: TONY HAWK: SHRED

The Burton For Joke-Stretching

DeathSpank

DEATHSPANK MANAGED TO strike two distinct chords with us: first, that it was actually quite funny, and second, that its voice actors didn't know how to deliver comedy properly. Timing is key, delivery is paramount, and over-acting any elements of a joke reliant on subtle wordplay is going to kill the humour stone dead. *DeathSpank* did this – we estimate – 4,528 times through the game. As such, it's impossible to award the Burton to anyone else. Hopefully *DeathSpank*'s acceptance speech won't be as painfully overdone as his in-game performance.

Runner-up: ROGUE WARRIOR

The Burton For Context

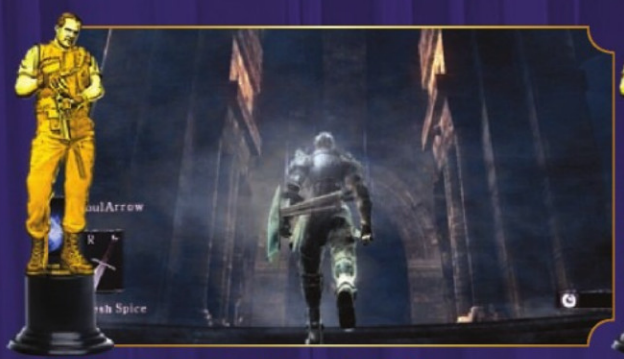
Rogue Warrior

THE CONTEXT AWARD acknowledges the contribution a game had to the perceptions of gamers across the world. Without this winner, we would never have managed to appreciate other games released over the last 12 months in context – without *Rogue Warrior*, we may not have been as open as we were to new, exciting FPS experiences. By being so awful, *Rogue Warrior* inadvertently helped countless gamers across the world form an appreciation for other, more deserving games.

Runner-up: QUANTUM THEORY

THE FORUM

After asking our loyal army (roughly translated: forum members on play-mag.co.uk) what their game of the year was, the winner with 16% of the vote was... *Bayonetta*! Joint runners-up were *Call Of Duty: Black Ops* and *Red Dead Redemption*.



The Burton For Sony Dropping The Ball

Demon's Souls

DEMON'S SOULS IS a rare beast – a game sold almost entirely on the back of some very positive reviews and word of mouth. Little to no marketing and a lack of 'known' name didn't hurt sales, and it has passed the 800k sales mark in a seemingly effortless fashion. So why did Sony drop the ball? It turned down the chance to publish the game outside of Japan, assuming it wouldn't perform as well as it actually did. Unlucky.

Runner-up: PASSING ON A KINECT-ALIKE

The Burton For Lying

Half-Minute Hero

THERE ARE LIES told by games all the time – some are big, some are small, some pass by without being noticed. But there was one lie over the last 12 months that really got our goat. *Half-Minute Hero* claimed to be a series of RPGs, each taking half a minute to complete. We clocked many – if not all – of these RPGs ('levels') as over the 30-second mark. We admire your balls, Marvelous – you deserve this Burton.

Runner-up: BACKBREAKER (NO BROKEN BACKS)

The Burton For Size Doesn't Matter

Just Cause 2

JUST CAUSE 2 had a huge map. It was even bigger than *GTA: San Andreas*'s map, and took a long time to navigate – even when flying at supersonic speeds. But size isn't everything, and there were times when playing *Just Cause 2* that we got bored of trawling around locations we hadn't discovered yet (no fast-travel unless you've been there). As such, *JC2* gets the coveted Burton for being utterly excessive – congratulations.

Runner-up: RED DEAD REDEMPTION

The Burton For Abbreviation

Call Of Duty: Black Ops

THERE'S SO MUCH fun to be had with videogame abbreviations. There's the world famous *GTA*; the cool colloquialism of *PES*; the simple phrasing of *PAA: OTRSPOD: E2* (you know, *Penny Arcade Adventures: On The Rain Slick Precipice Of Darkness: Episode 2*). But few are as elegant as the internet phenomenon that was *CODBLOPS*. Yes, it may sound like something nasty you'd do in the toilet, but there's something wonderful about it nevertheless. Something eloquent and powerful. If *CODBLOPS* isn't worthy of an award, we don't know what is.

Runner-up: ASS CRUD B'HOOD

THE WORDS

The highest-scoring game, *Call Of Duty: Black Ops* (94%), where we said, "be prepared to spend the next year playing nothing else." The lowest-scoring game, *Rogue Warrior* (09%), prompted the words, "makes us wish we didn't play games." Oh dear.

The Burton For Equestrian Appreciation

Red Dead Redemption

RARELY BEFORE HAVE we spent quite so long looking at a horse's arse. A good 30 per cent of *Red Dead*'s playtime *at least* is spent in the saddle, watching your mount's bottom bounce and wriggle as you ride across the outback. But such bouncing, and such wriggling! Rockstar's horses are the best we've seen in a game, beautifully animated in every way, whether it's galloping across the fields of West Elizabeth or trotting across an outcropping in the cliffs of New Austin. We don't appreciate *Red Dead*'s equestrians as much as Rathskeller Fork's Jeb, though – he takes it to a whole new, *creepy*, level.

Runner-up: ASSASSIN'S CREED BROTHERHOOD

The Burton For Smart Casual

Braid

BRAID FINALLY CAME to PS3 this year, and the first feature we noticed wasn't the complexity of the puzzles, but the fashion sense of protagonist Tim. His blue blazer and red tie is offset by a pair of beige chinos. *Braid* also wins this award because it's a 2D platformer that looks quite casual on the surface, but its puzzles are actually very smart… or… erm, something. Ah, we give up.

Runner-up: MAFIA II

The Burton For Mispronunciation

Fallout: New Vegas

EVERYONE IN THE Mojave Wasteland seems to refer to Caesar as 'Kai-sar'. Apparently it's got something to do with diphthongs and Classical Latin. Perhaps the radiation from the atomic war has mutated everyone's brains, in such a way that they revert to Classical Latin for specific phrases or perhaps it was just another bug in *New Vegas*'s somewhat dodgy code.

Runner-up: PRESIDENT KENNEDY IN CODBLOPS

The Burton For Patrick Stewart Employment

Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow

AH, PATRICK STEWART. Your broad smile, your bald, shiny head – all so good in so many ways. But your best feature has to be the wavering, dramatic tension of your voice in *Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow*. He should do *every* voice in every game from now on… or not.

Runner-up: MACBETH THE TV MOVIE

The Burton For Bizarre Death (presented by *James Bond 007: Blood Stone*)

Blur

NO, WE DON'T mean bizarre deaths like having a combine harvester fall on your head, we mean the near death of Bizarre Creations, with Activision currently considering its closure. This is a studio that's made some of the greatest games we've played. Here's hoping that 2011 sees something of a Bizarre resurrection.

Runner-up: REALTIME WORLDS

The Burton For Token Move Award

Sports Champions

WELL, LOOK. IF we're doing a round-up of all the greatest moments that occurred with PlayStation during 2010 we have to *mention* Move. It was the biggest release for Sony's PlayStation division in the entire year and signals a massive new direction for the console. Truth be told the games available so far aren't that good, but *Sports Champions* is the best of a bad lot.

Runner-up: R.U.S.E.

The Burton For Being Peggle

Peggle

DUM DUM DUM de dum dum dum dum dum dum dum dee duummmm dum dum! Can you tell what we're singing? It's the *Ode To Joy*, of course, the song that plays upon winning a level on *Peggle*. *Peggle* deserves an award simply for existing. It's a game that has absolutely no right to be any good whatsoever but somehow it's utterly *brilliant*.

Runner-up: KANE & LYNCH 2: DOG DAYS

The Burton For Future Channel 5 Projects

Split/Second: Velocity

CHANNEL 5 – EASILY the worst of the terrestrial TV channels – is always looking for new 'hip' and 'cool' shows to round out its schedule, which currently includes the irritating geek-chic of *The Gadget Show* and the yawning chasm of existential horror that is *Five Live*. Something about *Split/Second*'s fictional TV setting feels like it could slip right between those two shows – a bit of farcical mass destruction to watch while you let your dinner go down. Come on Five, you know you want to make this game a reality.

Runner-up: DEAD RISING 2

The Burton For Tesco Value

All HD Collections

LOVE 'EM OR hate ~~'em~~, you've got to admit that there's good value in these HD collections. So far we've had *The God Of War Collection*, *The Sly Collection* and *The Prince Of Persia Trilogy*, and we've still got *Beyond Good & Evil* and the Team Ico collection to look forward to. What's really great about these collections, though – more so than their cheap price – is that they give us a great excuse to play through brilliant games that we may have never returned to otherwise. We reckon we're going to see a lot more of these upscaled oldies in the future. Our money's on the next one being '*Rez HD – Now Even HDer*'.

Runner-up: FALLOUT: NEW VEGAS

The Burton For Being In This Feature For No Apparent Reason

Madden 11

LAST YEAR, IT was *Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood*, included at the behest of then editor Nick Jones. It was never explained why and we were too scared to question it. This year, it's the turn of *Madden 11*, a game that deserves its place among this year's PlayStation 3 elite, even if we're not sure why or how to justify it. Still, Jon wanted it in. "It's quite good," is his defiant and well-thought-out justification. Oh, alright then.

Runner-up: CALL OF JUAREZ: BOUND IN BLOOD

THE CREW

What do super-sub Dan and designer Ali consider their games of the year? "*Need For Speed*," says Dan, pointing. "*Enslaved* sounds good," says Ali. BUY THEM NOW.

The Burton For Lara Croft+1

Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light

THE PROBLEM WITH *Tomb Rai*... sorry, *Lara Croft* in co-op is it needs someone else to stand by her for the second player. A male character? Too obvious, plus you'd have to establish that there's no love angle otherwise have it overshadow the plot. A female character? There's the danger of upstaging Lara. A weird man-troll thing that no one remembers the name of? Yes!

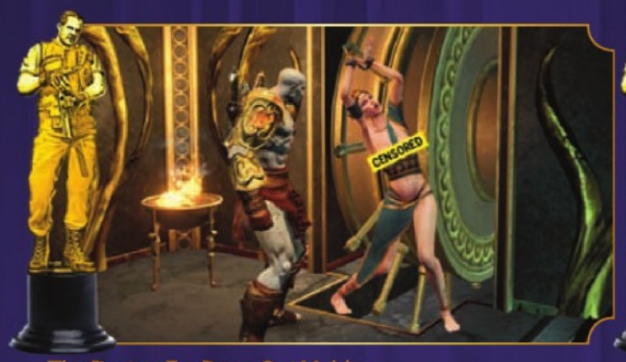
Runner-up: QUANTUM THEORY

The Burton For Prevention Of Cruelty To Beards

Medal Of Honor

THE INDUSTRY MIGHT be moving towards clean-shaven, wholesome heroes but not if EA has anything to do with it. Witness the cover of *Medal Of Honor*. It's the kind of beard Santa Claus would have if he wasn't contractually obliged to be family friendly. It makes a mockery of our wispy faces, our facial fuzz aimlessly fluttering around our sad, swollen faces.

Runner-up: STREET FIGHTER IV (GOUKEN, ZANGIEF, GEN)



The Burton For Baps-Out Maiden

God Of War III

IT'S TASTEFUL. MAYBE. Because it's historically accurate. Possibly. And that makes it culturally acceptable. To someone. But hey! At least these fair maidens aren't chained to a big cog that needs to be spun so it'll crush her beneath, giving up Three Red Orb-Shaped Units Of God Of War Currency and a side-dose of guilt in exchange for free passage to the next corridor. Oh. Actually wait. We've got this wrong, haven't we?

Runner-up: GOD OF WAR: GHOST OF SPARTA

The Burton For Rehousing Chocobos

Final Fantasy XIII

WE WERE GOING to make a joke about how chocobos have been forced out of their homes and relocated in the beautiful bush of Sazh's afro. Then we thought, what actually are their homes? Where do they live? We only ever see them running around, or eating grass, or making cute noises... so if they have been rehoused in Sazh's hair, where were they originally? *Final Fantasy XIII*. It makes you think.

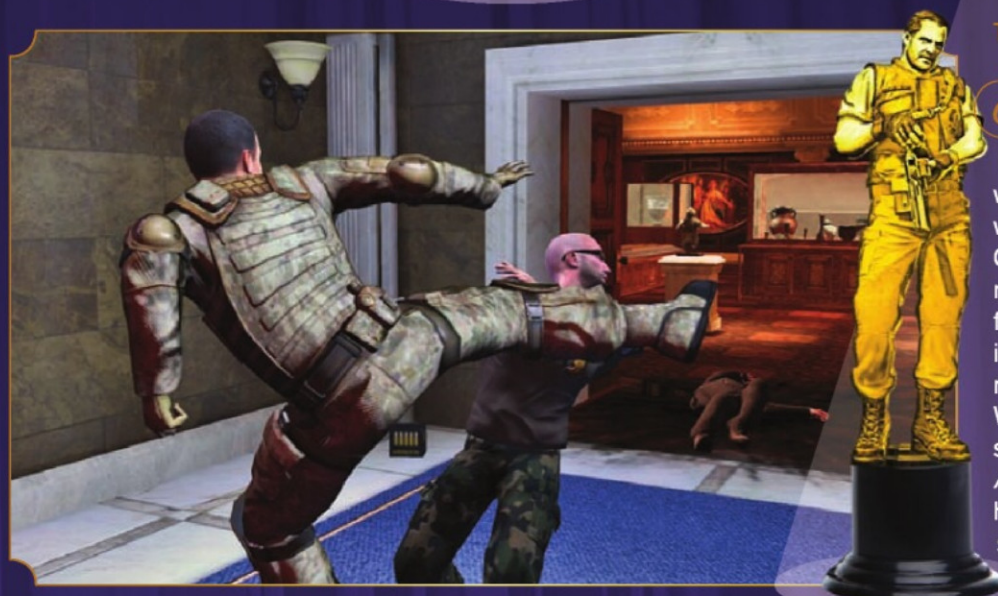
Runner-up: FINAL FANTASY XII

The Burton For Shoooryuken

Super Street Fighter IV

ARE YOU READY? Fight! Shoryuken! Shoooryuken! Shoryuken! Shoryureppa! (The sound of Ken doing standing fierce punches as he messes up the dragon punch input). Shoryuken! Shooooryuken! Shoooryuken! KO! My fight money! (Pause) This battle is about to continue… fight! Shoryuken! Shoooryuken! Shoryuken! KO! You win! (Sound of swearing, screams that "dragon punches are ****ing cheap", PS3 pad clattering on the floor and a door being slammed).

Runner-up: DAN

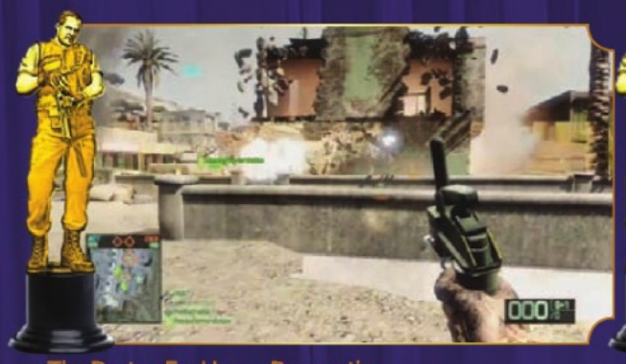


The Burton For Shittest Spy

Alpha Protocol

IF MICHAEL THORTON wore plimsoles with both his feet inside pillows while whispering 'gently does it', he'd lose Cool Points. He definitely wouldn't get mysterious ladies he meets on planes to follow him around the world, as happens in the game. But on the plus side, it would mean having The Loudest Feet In The World would no longer stop him from sneaking, as the slightest movement in *Alpha Protocol* will see every guard swivel his way. Even ones on levels you haven't started yet. Sigh.

Runner-up: 007: BLOOD STONE



The Burton For House Renovation

Battlefield: Bad Company 2

IF YEARS OF watching mediocre house renovation shows on daytime TV taught us anything, it's that we should get a job. Then we got a job, and we couldn't remember anything about house renovation. It's one of those vicious circle things we hear so much about. *Bad Company 2* has the right approach, though. If you don't like someone's house, don't rearrange the furniture. Just get in a tank and blow it up. Seems easy enough.

Runner-up: THE SIMS 3

The Burton For Pixel Perfect Puzzle Solving

Monkey Island

GAMES DON'T DO this any more. You know, bits where you get stuck and in frustration, you sweep the screen wondering if there's a tiny pixel that you missed yielding the rubber chicken with a pulley needed to proceed. Even when you're angry, there's a calm rhythm to point-and-clicks and it's a zen-like state perfectly encapsulated by the *Monkey Island* titles that have been spruced up for these non-pixelated modern times.

Runner-up: CSI: FATAL CONSPIRACY

The Burton For Unburtonness

Sonic The Hedgehog 4

THE BURTON FOR best comeback? The finally fulfilled promise? The definitive proof that 2D is better than 3D? The Sega has figured this thing out at bloody last? There were literally tens of millions (or maybe it was six) of suggestions for what Burton *Sonic 4* could win, before the **Play** team did that pose where we pretended we were thinking while hoping someone else would come up with an idea. The Burton For Unburtonness it is, then.

Runner-up: SONIC FREE RIDERS

The Burton For Who Published This?

EA Sports MMA

INSECURITIES. THEY PLAGUE us, but it must take a special kind of paranoia to insist that the name of the publisher should be in the title of your new game. *EA Sports MMA* is just about the most blatant act of ego massaging by a publisher this side of *EA Sports Active*. Was EA worried that the big logo on the front of the case or the spinning logo as you boot up *MMA* reminded you that 'EA Sports; it's in the game', wasn't going to be enough to remind people of who made it? Or was it perhaps that without a brand name attached like *Madden*, *FIFA* or (quietly now) *UFC*, EA felt it had to sell the game on its own reputation? We like to think it just enjoys having its name on things.

Runner-up: NBA 2K11

The Burton For Platinum Games Getting Two Burtons

Vanquish

TWO BURTONS IN a single year, that's virtually unheard of, but that's what Platinum Games has richly deserved after releasing *Bayonetta* and *Vanquish* at either end of 2010. *Vanquish* was a dazzling, adrenaline shot to the arm of gamers in October with its superb take on the third-person shooter genre that married the best and craziest elements of Japanese gaming with the precision shooting mechanics of the best of the West. As a counter-point to the equally bonkers, equally Japanese, but completely different *Bayonetta*, Platinum book-ended an amazing year of gaming.

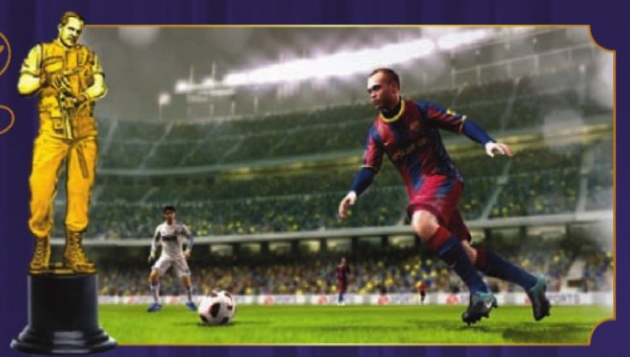
Runner-up: BAYONETTA

The Burton For Completely Necessary Playboy Images

Mafia II

MATURE AND CONSIDERED gaming is very popular right now. One of the finest examples of this in 2010 was *Mafia II* and the way it used collectable *Playboy* centrefolds as a hard-hitting and morally complex gameplay mechanic. Their inclusion made *Mafia II* a much more serious, thought-provoking and dramatic piece of gaming.

Runner-up: DEAD RISING 2



The Burton For Not Being PES

Fifa 11

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER was once the great, shining beacon of football supremacy on PlayStation, but as it has fallen into a geriatric stupor over the last few years we have badly needed a new hero to rise and take its place. So EA's *FIFA* has come to represent all that is good and wholesome about the global sport of football and this year's *FIFA 11* is the finest example so far.

Runner-up: PURE FOOTBALL

The Burton For Not Being FIFA

PES 2011

OF ALL THE *Pro Evolution Soccer* games released on PS3, *PES 2011* is easily the best, but that's not important. What is important is being different and standing out from the crowd. Sure, *FIFA 11* is a better game, but everyone plays it. What's special about that? If you want to be an individual instead of a sheep then you need to be playing *PES 2011*.

Runner-up: PURE FOOTBALL

The Burton For Gap Bridging

ModNation Racers

THE GAPS BETWEEN releases of our favourite games can be torture, but thankfully there is often a title that can make the wait more bearable. For us in 2010 it was *ModNation Racers*, which by adapting the Play, Create, Share mantra to kart racing managed to nicely bridge the gap between the release of *LBP* and *LBP 2*. Without it the wait would have been impossible.

Runner-up: 2010 FIFA WORLD CUP SOUTH AFRICA

The Burton For Being Inspired By A Child's Toy

Joe Danger

SOMETIMES GAMES ARE rather good at taking us back to our younger days. *Joe Danger* was one such game thanks in part to the fact that it was inspired by an old Evel Knievel toy that you had to pull back and let go for it to leap through the air off a ramp. It was by playing with this toy that Hello Games came up with the idea for one of the greatest PSN games ever.

Runner-up: TUMBLE

The Burton For Broken Bollocks

Skate 3

ONE OF THE great achievements of the *Skate* series has been that it has broken down the skateboarding game to the purest elements that make the sport so enjoyable; namely breaking people in half through hilarious bales from their boards. That's what skateboarding is all about and *Skate 3* provided even more midair control and crazier rag-doll effects.

Runner-up: KUNG-FU RIDER

The Burton For Services To Lapels

Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood

WE DON'T OFTEN give much thought to the lapel, but it is one of the most important things in life. How else, for instance, would you go about displaying small badges on your corduroy jacket? How would you work out where your jacket collar ended and the rest of your suit began? Being Italian, Ezio Auditore da Firenze is obviously a man well versed in the ways of fashion and his wonderful lapel display is something to behold. They give him an air of purpose and poise as he strides through the streets.

Runner-up: MAFIA II

THE SALES

Call Of Duty: Black Ops was the biggest-selling PlayStation 3 game last year, at least in Europe. It actually sold more than the Xbox 360 version, so boo-ya. Or something. That was followed by *FIFA 11*, *Gran Turismo 5* and *Red Dead Redemption*...

The Burton For Most Homages Per Minute

Darksiders

WE'VE NEVER BEEN fond of the term 'rip-off'. It carries too many negative connotations. Instead we like to think of games as paying homage to other titles through their blatant mimicry of gameplay or story. Of all the games in 2010 THQ and Vigil's *Darksiders* was the most laden with homages. In no particular order there are clear references in the gameplay to *Soul Reaver*, *The Legend Of Zelda*, *God Of War*, *Devil May Cry*, *Resident Evil 4* and *Portal*. And that's why we love it.

Runner-up: BAYONETTA

HOME THE

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IS WHERE HEART ISN'T

Homefront is one of the more intriguing first-person shooters due this year. It's different, it's intelligent and it asks difficult questions. It's also set to deliver a multiplayer that's much more than an afterthought. We talk to lead designer Erin Daly about putting together an online shooter that's willing to deviate from the norm

We're standing on the 86th floor observatory of the Empire State Building, gaping at the sight before us. Spread out below are a hundred thousand twinkling lights slowly pulsing under a starry sky. New York – the City That Never Sleeps – sprawls out in all directions like a carpet of black velvet dotted with silver and lined with gold.

We attempted to steel ourselves against this kind of sentiment. We thought, being the cynical games journalists that we are, that nothing could penetrate our steely exterior. But here we are, looking out at *that* skyline and we can't help but feel something of the New York magic they talk about in films. Manhattan exudes magnificence; its grandeur a shining symbol of a superpower at the peak of its power, one whose foundations are as unshakeable as its resolve. How could America ever be knocked from its top spot?

Later, we're sat chatting with *Homefront*'s lead designer Erin Daly. Kaos Studios is located but a few blocks away from the Empire State Building, the tower visible from the north-facing office windows, and we share our thoughts on the sight we witnessed, of how New York's majesty struck us as a vision of America than could never be toppled. "Well," says Daly, "that's pretty much what our game is about."

Homefront sees the US crippled by debt, and in its moment of weakness Korea unites under North Korean rule, quickly becoming a new superpower and invading US soil. As they say, 'everyone has their moment in the sun', and in Kaos's game North America's has come to an end.

It's a scary vision, particularly considering the real-life events occurring in the East, with North Korea having recently fired upon South Korea and terms like 'enormous retaliation' and 'nuclear war' being uttered with frightening sincerity.

"We're a speculative fiction game, so we're not hoping that what we have written comes to pass," explains Daly, the promptness of his answer telling us he's been questioned on this topic before. "Obviously it's a very bleak scenario and a very dark one, but it's a what-if scenario. We don't wish that any actual conflict occurs between North and South Korea. Nobody would. But it's a little bit scary to see just how close some of these events that we've talked about are to happening."

That's partly what makes *Homefront* one of the more interesting games coming out early this year; it plays on our fears of loss of control and instability with a single-player campaign that's not *entirely* unimaginable.

Even the multiplayer – which is what we've visited New York to see – isn't free from

"AS THEY SAY, 'EVERYONE HAS THEIR MOMENT IN THE SUN', AND IN KAOS'S GAME NORTH AMERICA'S HAS COME TO AN END"

WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION

We talk with Kaos Studio's Brian Holinka, senior designer on Homefront, about his work on creating the game's vehicles

HOW MUCH DOES VEHICLE DESIGN IMPACT ON MAP DESIGN?

You can't make areas in which vehicles can just go anywhere, because that means the infantry experience really starts to suck. If you can get a tank in somewhere then the chances are that area doesn't have good infantry cover. So when we map out an area we plot the paths for tanks and Humvees, and then plot out some infantry-only paths. The infantry needs somewhere to hide from the vehicles, so we make that very explicit in the level design. The thing that's really challenging is that helicopters have no boundaries; they can fly over everything. So you need to provide a lot of good air cover for the infantry and ground vehicles, too.

DOES HAVING DRONES MAKE THIS TASK EVEN MORE DIFFICULT?

Yes. But the thing we've done with ground drones is that if you're facing one down and it's got a 50 calibre machine gun, chances are you're going to lose. But if a player gets behind the drone and melees it, it's done.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD VEHICLE FOR AN ONLINE SHOOTER?

Identifying the most awesome part of it. So for the Abrams tank we wanted firing that tank cannon to be really awesome and satisfying – it comes with a big camera shake, big muzzle flash, an explosion, the rumble, the sound echoing, and it's really effective at killing people. That makes you feel really powerful. For helicopters it was about making them easy to fly and really accessible.

WHAT KIND OF KILLSTREAK PERKS DO YOU GET WHEN PERFORMING WELL IN A VEHICLE DURING BATTLE COMMANDER?

You get stuff like increased vehicle damage, movement speed and a shortened EMP, which means instead of being disabled by an EMP for four seconds it will cut that time down to two. We're still tuning a passive repair perk, which means if your vehicle is out of combat for a while it will repair itself to a certain point. But we're in the balancing stages with that one because if you went all the way back to full health it would make it too hard for other players.

32 PLAYERS IS A LARGE NUMBER. WHAT CHALLENGES DOES THAT PRESENT TO VEHICLE COMBAT?

Well, once the sky gets full of helicopters the game starts to get really bad for anybody who *isn't* in a helicopter. So the big challenge is pacing it appropriately and tuning BP to ensure there are never more than two helicopters in the sky at one time. Another challenge is making sure that the vehicle-on-vehicle balancing makes sense. Tanks need to feel very tanky. If you're in a tank then you spent a lot of money on it, so it should last under sustained fire. But the guy with the rocket launcher, he fires three times and he wants to see the tank explode. You've got to manage the expectations on both sides.

The single-player levels are meticulously detailed.

In *Homefront* you're not a lone hero. You're just another soldier.

"'LARGE SCALE' IS THE KEY TERM FOR HOMEFRONT, WITH ITS MULTIPLAYER SUPPORTING UP TO 32 PLAYERS AND VEHICLE WARFARE ON HUGE, OPEN MAPS"

the narrative's fearsome grasp. "*Homefront*'s multiplayer takes place during a time period we call the Occupation Wars. This is a time when the KPA (Korean People's Army) was invading the US and the remnants of the US military are scattered and unorganised and trying to fight back using the tools that they have available. So you've got these pretty large-scale battles happening on pastoral farmlands, and maps such as Borderlines, which have familiar businesses like Hooters and White Castle. There's Cul-de-Sac, too, which is in an American suburb that's been deserted. It's quite twisted because you've got this conflict occurring on what was once a familial neighbourhood."

'Large scale' is the key term for *Homefront*, with its multiplayer supporting up to 32 players and vehicle warfare on huge, open maps like those Daly described. "Kaos's history is really in these kinds of large-scale-type games, so we really took what we did in the past with *Frontlines: Fuel Of War*, which was interesting, dynamic gameplay, and said how can we make this appeal to mainstream FPS gamers?" he asks. "How can we streamline it and amp up the intensity and pacing of it?

"What it comes down to is synergy of this large-scale experience. We're trying to create a level of intensity and scale that you haven't seen before in an FPS. We wanted to deliver an experience that's all-out warfare. There are tanks rolling around, helicopters firing rockets, people calling in air strikes, players piloting drones – it's about delivering the synergy of that experience, and amping up the intensity."

And it really works. We've seen the 'big is better' philosophy fumbled before in the 256-player and now largely forgotten *MAG*. But unlike Zipper's game, *Homefront*'s multiplayer feels large without becoming confusing; open but also clever and compact. Kaos learnt its lessons in *Frontlines: Fuel Of War*. This time around it's created a better game, tightening its gameplay and tweaking *Frontline*'s ideas, but without deviating too far from the online shooter template that's quickly becoming the norm. "A lot of the top games are doing a great job with the core infantry experience, stuff like the feel of the weapons, the player movement, all the kind of core control systems," explains Daly. "So we didn't try to reinvent the wheel when it comes to any of that stuff. When you look at our control scheme you'll notice that it's based on the *Call Of Duty* control scheme, and our gun mechanics are fairly familiar. We just took that and said, 'okay that's a great base. How can we build on that?'"

Kaos is building on Infinity Wards RPG and levelling mechanics through Battle Points – a system that ensures *Homefront*'s play remains structured despite the scale and scope of the action that's occurring. Any typical skirmish on *Homefront*'s multiplayer can see Humvees tearing across your path; Apache Gunships raining barrages of missiles from above; tanks trundling across rubble; airborne and ground-based drones searching for exposed infantry; air strikes being called in; RPGs whizzing past and much, much more. Battle Points ensures that every deathmatch can provide enough scope for all of these things without descending into absolute anarchy. BP guarantees a layer of tactics and strategy under the anarchy.

It works by doling out points for kills, capturing objectives and team-based work. Use a Recon Drone, for instance, and every target you mark you'll gain some BP, and then even more when another player takes down that target. These BP can then be used to purchase vehicles or special items that are similar to the rewards you get for killstreaks in *COD*.

"The BP system brings a lot of interesting things to the game," says Daly. "We needed to balance our really powerful tools with the amount of players in a game. We can't allow players to just access them at any time.

"And what we found was that we wanted to allow all players access to those powerful tools, not just elite players. We wanted to give all players access to these things but keep them balanced. So we settled on the BP system, which allows players to earn points incrementally as they play a match, and then use what we call that 'save or spend' philosophy. Do you buy an

'Farm' is a spacious map, with plenty of room for vehicles.

early vehicle or weapon like the RPG or Humvee, or do you save up money for a good portion of the match so you can buy something like a helicopter?

"It creates interesting, on-the-fly strategic choices. Say you're in the middle of a match and you see that one of your objectives is being taken. Do you spend BP and buy an air strike and defend that objective, or do you want to respawn in a helicopter and take out that tank over there? You're constantly making these choices on the fly. We want to keep you in the flow, and engaged in the action at all times. We want you thinking about more than just 'where am I aiming' and 'who am I shooting'. There's a strategic layer."

BP also has another knock-on effect on *Homefront*, in that it doesn't just create a structure off of which Kaos can hang its gameplay – it also has a direct effect on the pace and tempo of online play. There's a sense of building escalation to each match; a crescendo of violence, if you will. Players start out with very little BP meaning matches are initially low-key affairs – you might see a Humvee or two, or perhaps a drone, but nothing too worrying. As players earn more points, however, you'll soon start to see bigger vehicles and more weapons deployed on the field. By the time you reach the middle of the match big, climactic battles start to break out, with people calling in helicopters, deadly air strikes and rockets streaking across the battlefield. It's intense stuff. "That was a key role of ours," says Daly. "Making sure that there was a curve of escalation to each match; that it wasn't just a constant repetitiveness."

Another clever new addition that serves this same purpose is one revealed to **Play**, for the first time, during our visit to Kaos. Dubbed Battle Commander, it's a new mode that takes ideas like killstreaks and reshapes them into an entirely new game mode.

Battle Commander is another layer of gameplay on top of game modes like Team Deathmatch and Ground Control. Basically, an AI Battle Commander monitors each side and their opponents, and identifies threats as the match progresses. Threats consist of any player who's performing well. So, say you're on a hot killstreak – the more kills you get, the more stars out of five you're awarded, and along with them increasingly beneficial perks, like UAV scans, faster move speeds and so on.

However, the more stars and buffs you gain, the more notoriety also. Say you have one star; this will mean two members of the opposing team will get your general area marked on their minimap. Two stars might mean three enemies know the whereabouts of your position. If you manage to get five stars – which is no easy task – the entire enemy team will soon be descending on your location. They're incentivised by the BP system, too. The more stars you've got, and the more notoriety you've gained, the higher a BP bounty on your head. So, if you want to amass a healthy amount of BP and get that Apache Helicopter bought, going after the opposing team's deadliest players is a good way to start.

"Battle Commander is all about giving players a more focused goal of what to do," explains Daly. "The AI commander identifies priority threats, which could be a player that's doing really well; someone performing well in a vehicle; a spawn camper that's being a jerk; a drone threat if you're using drones effectively – you can even become a Recon Drone threat if you're marking too many targets. The AI commander then assigns hunters to go and hunt that guy using info about where that target is on the minimap. Then, on the other team that AI commander is looking at his team and saying, 'who are the best players on my team? Who are the players that the enemy commander is marking as threats?' And it's giving those players rewards and buffs that are going to help keep them alive.

"The system identifies and targets these interesting relationships and situations, and then points players towards them. It keeps the games dynamic, and makes sure they never play out the same way twice."

It's an elegant solution to keeping individual players focused in matches that could otherwise feel directionless, ensuring that

> "KAOS HAS POURED A LOT OF EFFORT INTO MAKING SURE THAT THE SYSTEMS IT HAS IMPLEMENTED ARE WELL BALANCED"

BUILDING BETTER WORLDS

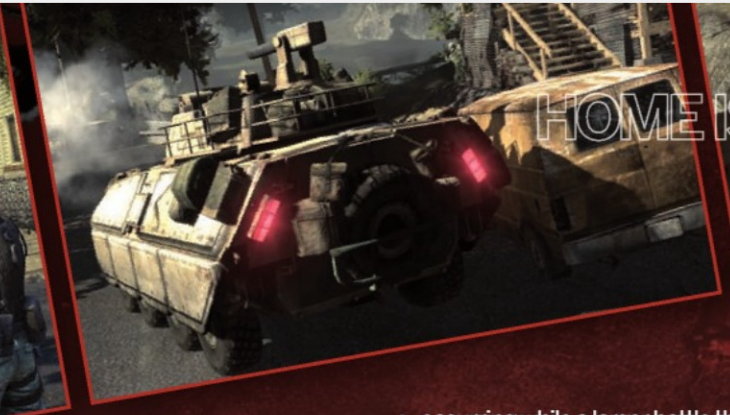
Considering their size and the fact they're supporting between 16 and 32 players, designing well-balanced and intelligent maps is no easy task. Lead designer Erin Daly takes us through the process

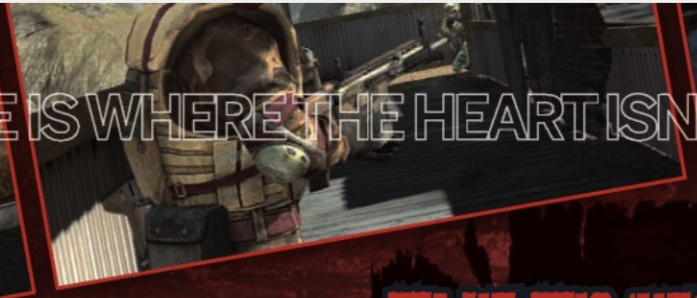
"It's an organic process. It usually starts with high-level concepts. We go to the level design team and say, 'Hey, pitch us some ideas.' They go and do some visual research and come up with some references. We want stuff that feels American – fast food restaurants and stuff like that."

"Next they usually build a top-down Photoshop paintover, which has the basic structure, like road layout, infantry pathing, vehicle pathing, all at a high macro level. Then we make sure there are enough sight lines and verticality to the map."

"At that point we create a 'brick out' stage where they build it all out of grey boxes in rough form. Then we start playtesting and that goes on for quite a while. Once we feel like the structure is really solid we bring in the art team, and they start their work."

"At that point things usually change, because the map might not feel authentic enough. A room might need to feel more like a restaurant, so the art team will want to rearrange the seats and add tables and everything. We'll be like, 'okay, but these sight lines need to be preserved!' There's a lot of back and forth there."





any one of the potential 32 players on a map has some kind of objective to work towards at any one time. It also effectively fosters personal battles between players, as we discovered during one match on a map titled Farm.

Farm's a large, spacious, rural map, with plenty of room for tanks to manoeuvre between the farmhouses that are scattered across the battle zone. There are smaller, contained chunks of architecture as well, and rocky forests that give infantry cover when they need to move out in the open. Battles feel expansive and widespread, with all of the three capture points seeing activity at any one time. Basically, it's not the kind of map that fosters intimate one-on-ones.

At least it wouldn't be, if it weren't for the implementation of Battle Commander. "One of our threats is called Nemesis, " says Daly of the new system. "Basically what happens there is if some guy's killed you four times in a match then suddenly he's going to become your nemesis, and he's going to come with a bounty that you're going to get if you take him out."

So, while playing Farm we find ourselves killed repeatedly by a member of the opposing team. Battle Commander soon marked his position on our map, labelling our irritating foe as our Nemesis. Too right, we thought. Entering the space marked by the circle on our map – and ignoring the larger battle waging around us for the time being – we crept up and around the building, flanking our 'nemesis' carefully and slowly. Soon we were right behind him, and a quick melee kill to the back bagged us a nice bounty of several hundred BP. It was an intimate, claustrophobic, personal encounter, but occurring while a larger battle thundered all around – somewhat reminiscent of the harrowing knife fight scene in *Saving Private Ryan*.

"It creates that kind of tense dynamic between players," says Daly. "If I know someone's hunting me, and they know they're after me, you get this great interplay between how both players behave."

It's all rather impressive at this point. Guns feel weighty and responsive, nothing feels to over or under-powered, and although there are small problems like too low a throwing arc for the grenade, a quick nudge and suggestion to Daly meant that Kaos is now well aware of the issue. But what is really impressive is that *Homefront*'s multiplayer is currently still in Alpha, and although it's a little bit rough around the edges visually, mechanically it works like a charm; even better than *MAG*'s finished product, in fact. Kaos has poured a lot of effort into making sure that the systems it has implemented are well balanced throughout, and don't favour any one style of play.

"We don't want the rich-get-richer problem with BP, where you've got these expert players who earn points so quickly that they're bringing out powerful weapons early enough that they're upsetting the balance of the overall match," says Daly. "We've done a lot of work on the earn rates and the potency of those tools to ensure a nice curve to the earning. It's a skill-based game and good players are always going to earn more, but we want to make sure that the early guy, who's not the best player, can still get good access to the toys."

But Daly knows that the team's work is still far from done. "We're close to wrapping things up on Alpha, but there are still quite a few bugs that need polishing, there's a lot of balancing going on, and we're even going to be balancing post-ship.

"But we feel that nobody has really delivered a large-scale warfare game like this to the FPS gamer," he says with a smile. "Nobody's taken the concept of large-scale warfare, and taken that teamwork and emergent play, and distilled it and streamlined it and married it to the tight infantry experience that a *Halo* player or a *Call Of Duty* player can really sink their teeth into. We see a big opportunity there to do something different."

In-game 'advertising' actually makes sense in *Homefront*.

The tanks are strong and robust, but don't feel overpowered.

THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'

Homefront is set in 2027, but unlike other near-future shooters this game actually has a detailed back story. Here's Homefront's frightening vision of the next 17 years:

2010

2011 North Korea's weapons program grows significantly, leading to some concerned looks and finger wagging from the UN

2012 Kim Jong-il dies and is succeeded by his son Kim Jong-un

2013 Kim Jong-un's first task is to unite North and South Korea under North Korean rule

2015

2015 Gas prices rise to a frankly ridiculous $20 in the United States, leading to lots of angry Americans

2017 The US dollar goes all wrong, meaning America has to pull forces from foreign countries

2018 Japan surrenders to the Greater Korean Republic, and the two form an 'alliance'

2020

2022 The United State's economic system collapses totally. Oh dear

2024 Korea occupies and seizes many of the nations in East Asia

2025 The Greater Korean Republic invades the US

2025 An EMP hidden in a communications satellite is used to completely disable United States infrastructure

2025 GKR forces seize Hawaii. Not to go on holiday, mind

2025 Cyber attack takes down hardened sites

2025 Korean troops control San Francisco, again, not to do some sightseeing

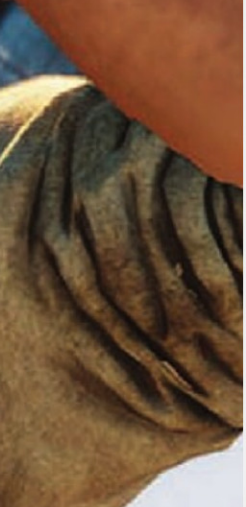
2026 US military is scattered, everything has gone bad. It's time for you to step in and kick some ass

2030

PREVIEW

The games that will shape the futu

We've really missed Drake's rugged good looks and charisma.

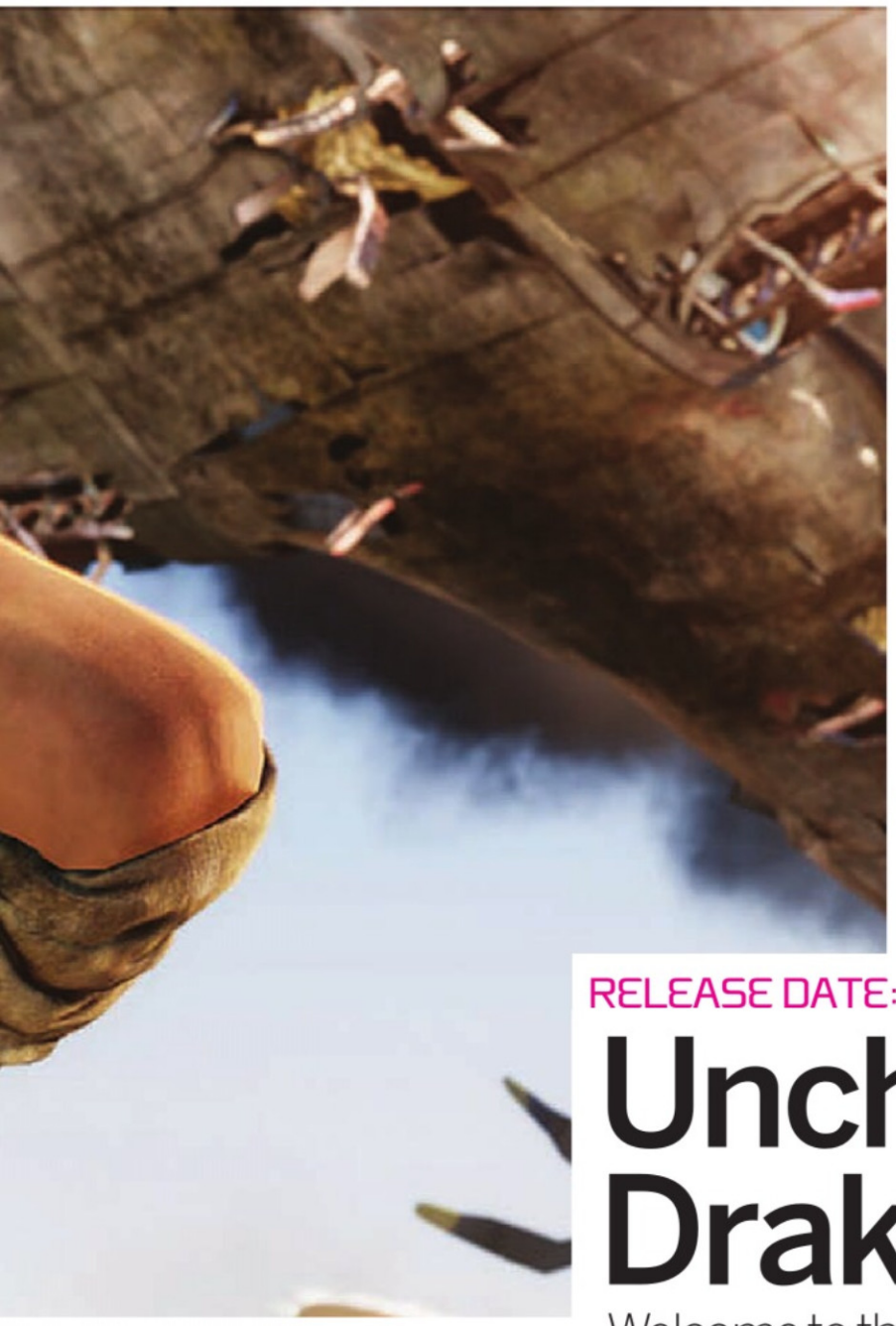


HANDY MAN

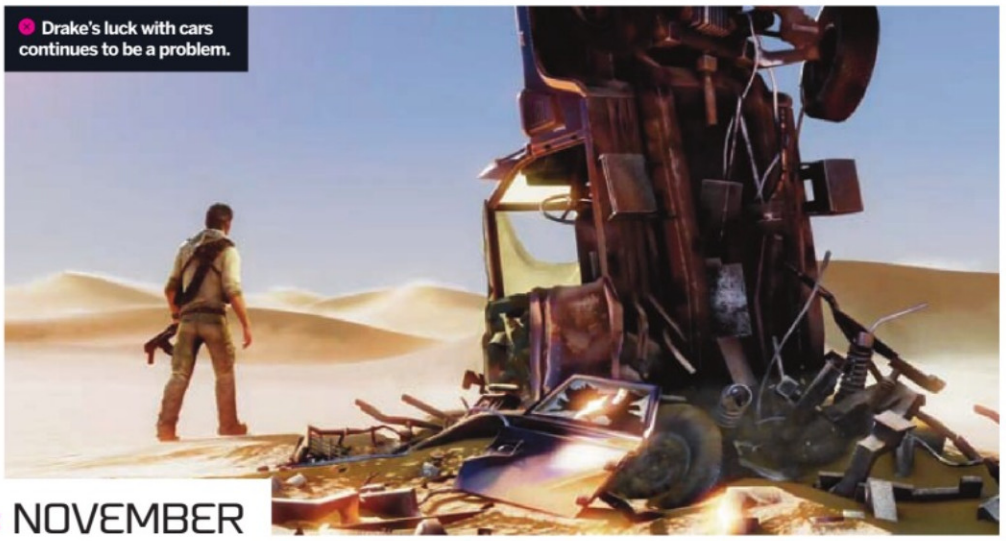
Close-quarters combat gets an overhaul

WHEN YOU PICK up *Uncharted 3* this November (because we already know that you will) you'll find that Nathan Drake is a much more handy fighter than he used to be. The close-quarters combat in previous games was relatively simple. With *Uncharted 3* Drake will be able to go toe-to-toe with multiple enemies at once, has some new contextual takedown moves, like smashing an enemy's head against a table, and can leap from heights to land on an enemy. All these new moves should make handling guards and soldiers much simpler as well as diversifying the range of combat options you have at any given moment.

Drake will be trekking from Europe into the Middle East.



Uncharted 3 is going elemental with its key features.

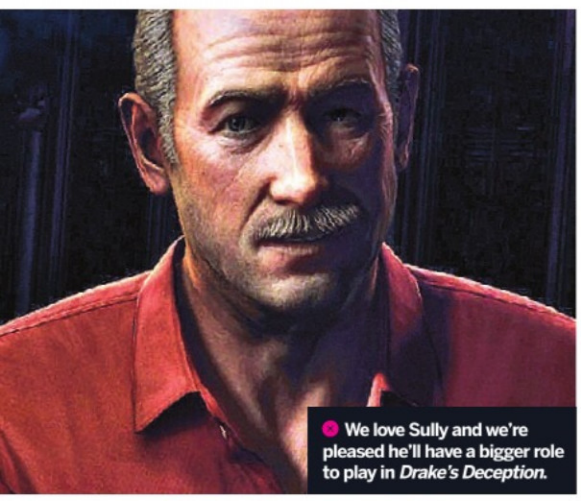


Drake's luck with cars continues to be a problem.

RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER

Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception

Welcome to the dark side of the dune



We love Sully and we're pleased he'll have a bigger role to play in *Drake's Deception*.

There are all sorts of treasures in the desert.

PS3

It's a measure of how Naughty Dog has grown up over all these years of PlayStation development that despite all the great games making their way to the PS3 this year and all the games that have been announced in recent months there is only one on everyone's lips. From *Crash Bandicoot* to *Jak And Daxter* and now *Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception*. It's been one hell of a journey.

It's been interesting looking back over that gameography, looking for clues as to how Naughty Dog will approach its threequel. Certainly in the past Naughty Dog has opened with a concept-driven game, refined that concept in its sequel and then refined it even further for a third game. Beyond that it would be hard to judge where the studio will take *Uncharted 3* based purely on past experience. Besides, *Uncharted* is on a scale like nothing this developer has ever done before and could yet end up being the defining franchise of this generation of consoles.

What we know for sure is that like the previous two *Uncharted* games this will be a fresh, original story that weaves historical fact and fiction into its plot and comes out the other end panting for breath. We also know that *Drake's Deception* will once again be looking to push back the boundaries of what we believe to be possible in terms of graphics, physics and interactivity. While Naughty Dog will not be rebuilding its engine from scratch like it did with *Uncharted 2*, it will still be integrating new features and refined programming to give us another stunning-looking game.

> Drake's Deception will be looking to push the boundaries of what's possible in terms of graphics, physics and interactivity

The areas most people seem to be focusing on right now are sand and fire. Many had guessed that having conquered the jungle and snow Drake would be tested by a desert, but few pinned him down to the Arabian Peninsula, which only goes to show that it is a region of the world as mysterious to the West now as it has been over the centuries. As a setting it does pose unique challenges and we would imagine that it's those challenges that made Naughty Dog choose to take the story there, not the other way around.

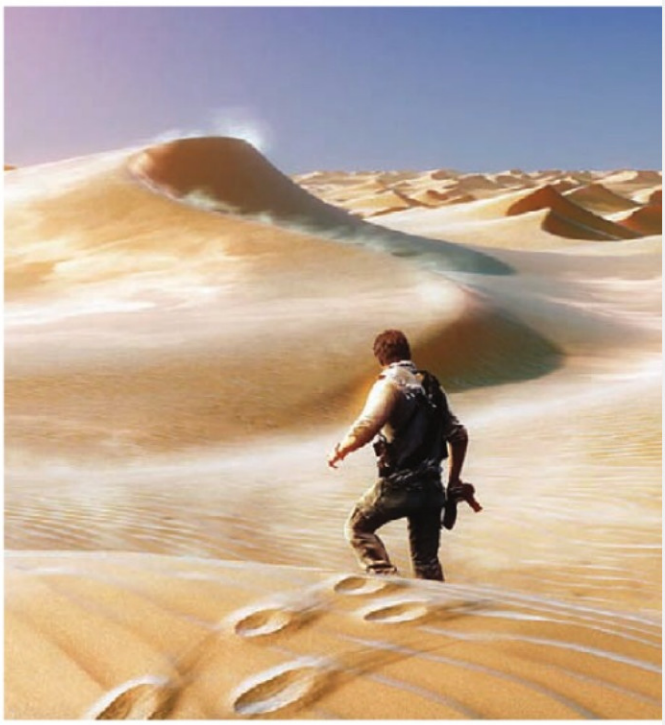
Seeing how the desert of this region is handled is going to be very interesting. While *Uncharted 3*'s announcement trailer gave us no real sign of how the sand would look in-game, it did give us a peek at how it should look. As the mounds of sand give way and spread out from Nathan Drake's footsteps you can already tell that making this simple element work in a natural and realistic way is going to be tough. However, a fine job was done getting the snow to work in *Uncharted 2*, so we have no doubts about it being achieved.

Then there's the fire, which again is far more complex than you would imagine. Clearly *Uncharted 3* is getting elemental on us as this new >

Something tells us there will be a plane crash involved...

Sully is likely to be as handy to have around as ever.

Drake can now kick multiple asses at once, as the combat system will be getting an overhaul.



tech gives the game's hot yellow and red stuff realistic animations and movement. You'll see flames creep across the ceiling, climb up walls and fiery cinders fall to the ground like raindrops. Naturally all this fire also casts its light around buildings, washing Drake in light and filling buildings with smoke. It promises to be something special to behold.

And then completing the element triangle in this game we believe will be water. Some glimpses of gameplay from *Uncharted 3*'s announcement trailer see Drake wading through water at chest height while attempting to fight his way through some henchmen and then running away from a torrent of water in a corridor, seemingly inside an upturned boat. If these sneak peeks are anything to go by then Naughty Dog has put some significant effort into developing its water physics and interactivity. That's definitely going to be something to look forward to.

But it's all about how the game feels in the end. For all the settings and the fancy new physics elements, it will once again come down to how the game plays and how it tells its story. In these two departments we're looking at one of the best studios around. Drake is certainly going to have his work cut out with a trek through the desert seeming likely, a plane crash sequence looking like *Uncharted 3*'s one-up on the train sequences from *Uncharted 2* and the theme of deception likely to test his friendships to the max. We're obviously delighted with the news that Sully will be playing a major role in all this as we get to share a bit more time with him and see the devilishly charismatic duo bounce off one another.

What other supporting characters may be joining Drake on this adventure we really don't know at this point, but Naughty Dog has been suggesting that Drake will spend very little time on his own during this adventure. His long gaze across the empty desert would suggest otherwise, of course, but it's in watching him interact with others that we really get to see Drake at his best. The likelihood of a return from Elena is obviously high, but then again she and Drake managed to drift apart between the last two games, so there's no telling how their relationship stands now. Knowing Drake, though, things have probably cooled off between them a little and some new relationship will threaten to derail his ambitions this time around.

And so now we play the waiting game, with a little under a year until release we at least know that we won't have to wait long. Sony has shown no fear of delaying games in the last few years if extra time is needed, but Naughty Dog has shown no sign that it couldn't hit a deadline. Right now we don't really want to think about that, but rather on how the game is going to turn out and based only on what we've seen to date we're feeling very confident. There are few developers working today that can fill us with such unquestioning enthusiasm and hope, but *Uncharted 3* is fortunate enough to have just such a studio behind it.

> For all the settings and fancy new physics elements, it will again come down to how the game plays and how it tells its story

Naughty Dog is developing **Uncharted 3.** Keep an eye on **www.unchartedthegame.com** for details.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Outright the most anticipated game since we all finished playing *Uncharted 2*.
- The return of this generation's most charismatic and loveable rogues in Nathan Drake.
- The promise of yet another groundbreaking title that pushes the PS3 to its limits.
- A fantastic new mystery to unravel and some great set pieces already being teased.

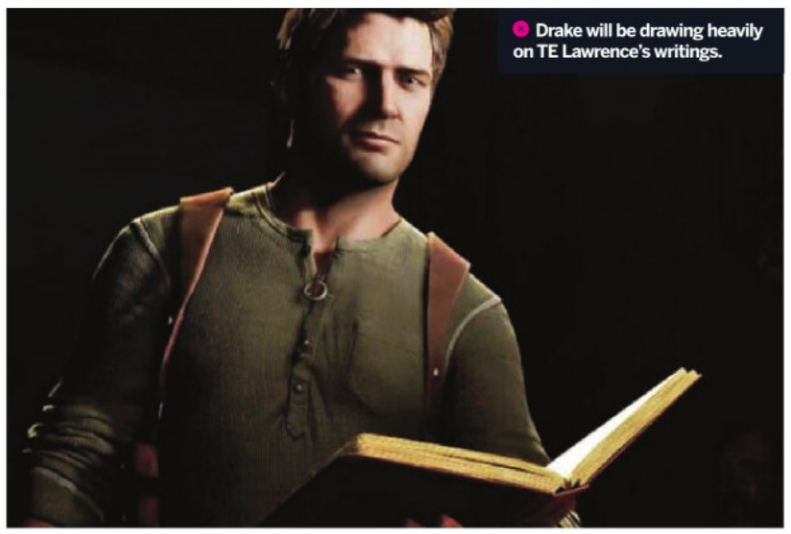
READ ME

Some people seemed to think *Uncharted 3* would be set in Egypt. What a bunch of fools those people look like now.

www.imagineshop.co.uk

Platforming and puzzling are still massive parts of *Uncharted.*

It will be fascinating to see how Naughty Dog deals with the sand physics.



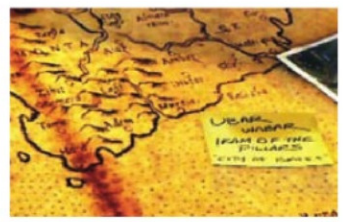
Drake will be drawing heavily on TE Lawrence's writings.

UNCHARTED 3'S CLUES

The secrets hidden in the announcement trailer

Drake's Diary Just in case you weren't sure, it would seem *Drake's Deception* will be making reference to Nathan's famous ancestor, Sir Francis Drake. That book with the hole in it is his diary. The hole is from when Sully was shot in *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune* and it saved his life.

The Death Of Lawrence This news clipping is about Lawrence's death in 1935. He died on his motorbike trying to avoid two young boys on bikes. His death led to motorcyclists using helmets as this would likely have saved his life. Perhaps *Uncharted 3* thinks there was more to it all.



Iram Of The Pillars This Post-It note features the names Ubar and Wabar, both names used in reference to the Iram of the Pillars, a lost trading city in the 650,000 sq kilometres of the Rub' al Khali desert that is believed to have existed from 3000BC to around 100AD. The 'City Of Brass' is an *Arabian Nights* story about explorers looking for a lost city. They seek a brass vessel that Solomon put a genie in, but meet robotic warriors and mummies.

Money These English 10 and 20 pound notes would hint rather heavily that as well as the desert and a French Chateau, Drake will be spending some time and a little money in Blighty. What will he be looking for here?

Seven Pillars Of Wisdom TE Lawrence's (aka Lawrence of Arabia) account of his time as liaison for the British armed forces with Arab rebels fighting against the Turks in the desert. Lawrence was actually an archaeologist before his service.

Drake's Notes Lots of clues here. The names Thomas, Thilby and Thesiger all refer to explorers who led expeditions within the Rub' al Khali in the early 20th Century. The symbol above the names is a Monas Hieroglyphica that represents the Sun, Moon, Earth and elements. The larger symbol is the Seal of Solomon, belonging to the first king of Israel to give him power over genies and demons. This would tie in with the reference to the *Arabian Nights*.

Place your bets

We all have our theories, but what are the odds of these things happening in Uncharted 3?

FREE-ROAMING

On one hand, it's fashionable to do this with games. On the other, it's not something that would fit in with the *Uncharted* ethos at all. **ODDS: 20-1**

SAND-YETIS

We've had mutant beasts and standard snow-yetis (with a *Scooby Doo* twist), so sand-yetis in some form seem a cert. **ODDS: 5-4**

SULLY IS DRAKE'S FATHER

The story in *Uncharted 3* focuses on Drake's *relationship* with *father figure* Sully. Red herring or obvious clue? We'll go with the latter. **ODDS: 2-1**

BETTER GUNPLAY

It doesn't hurt to have safe bets in there, so we'll go with this one. The controls for shooting in *Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception* will be... drumroll... *better*. **ODDS: 5-4**

FULL CO-OP

It was a limited experiment last time around. This time we expect – or just hope – to see the entire game playable in co-op. **ODDS: 7-1**

DEEPER COMPETITIVE MULTIPLAYER

This one's a bit of a given, as we've already been told *Drake's Deception* is gunning for the online big boys. **ODDS: evens**

MARK WAHLBERG

Recently announced as apparently playing Drake in the movie adaptation, does this mean Marky Mark will make an appearance in *Uncharted 3*? No. **ODDS: 100-1**

NASA TECHNOLOGY

The kind of subterranean detection gubbins used in finding Iram Of The Pillars in real life could make an appearance in *Drake's Deception*. Of course, it could not. **ODDS: 28-1**

QUIPS

That's as in 'QUIntessentially Pithy Smartassery', of which Drake and Sully are kings. This is more guaranteed than Guarantor The Guarantor. **ODDS: evens**

HAT/WHIP/HALF-TUCK

Apparently Drake takes some cues from Indy. This means he should get a hat (for the sun), a whip (for whipping) and a half-tuck (for why not?). **ODDS: 12-1**

BATTLES WITH THE ELEMENTS

We're talking dehydration, mainly. With a focus on desert locales, Drake may find himself taking on nature itself, having to drink regularly to keep himself alive. It's doubtful, though. **ODDS: 50-1**

NOLAN NORTH

We're tired of Nolan North being in every single game, so hopefully he won't be in this one. What do you mean 'crucial to the series'? **ODDS: he's in the game**

SEVERE BEATINGS

Lawrence Of Arabia is an influence on *Drake's Deception*. Apparently the Welshman was a bit of a masochist. We're just putting two and two together here, and coming up with PUNCH. **ODDS: 5-1**

NO LOVE TRIANGLES

We're done with that nonsense – Drake and Elena are a thing, Chloe is off being pestered by Sully and there'll be no more stupid soap opera jealousy. Though there might be. **ODDS: 4-1**

CHANGING GEOGRAPHY

It's not all set in the desert, but the parts that are should see a living, moving landscape. Either that or just something collapsing would prove us right. Easy money. **ODDS: 2-1**

BEST. SAND. EVER.

Uncharted 2 still has some of the best snow we've ever seen. We expect *Drake's Deception* to have the best sand. Though it will be decidedly less Christmassy. **ODDS: 5-4**

CAMELS

If camels, or 'desert horses' as they're known, don't make an appearance we will be confused, annoyed and wrong about thinking they will be in the game. **ODDS: 6-1**

AN EVIL ENGLISHMAN

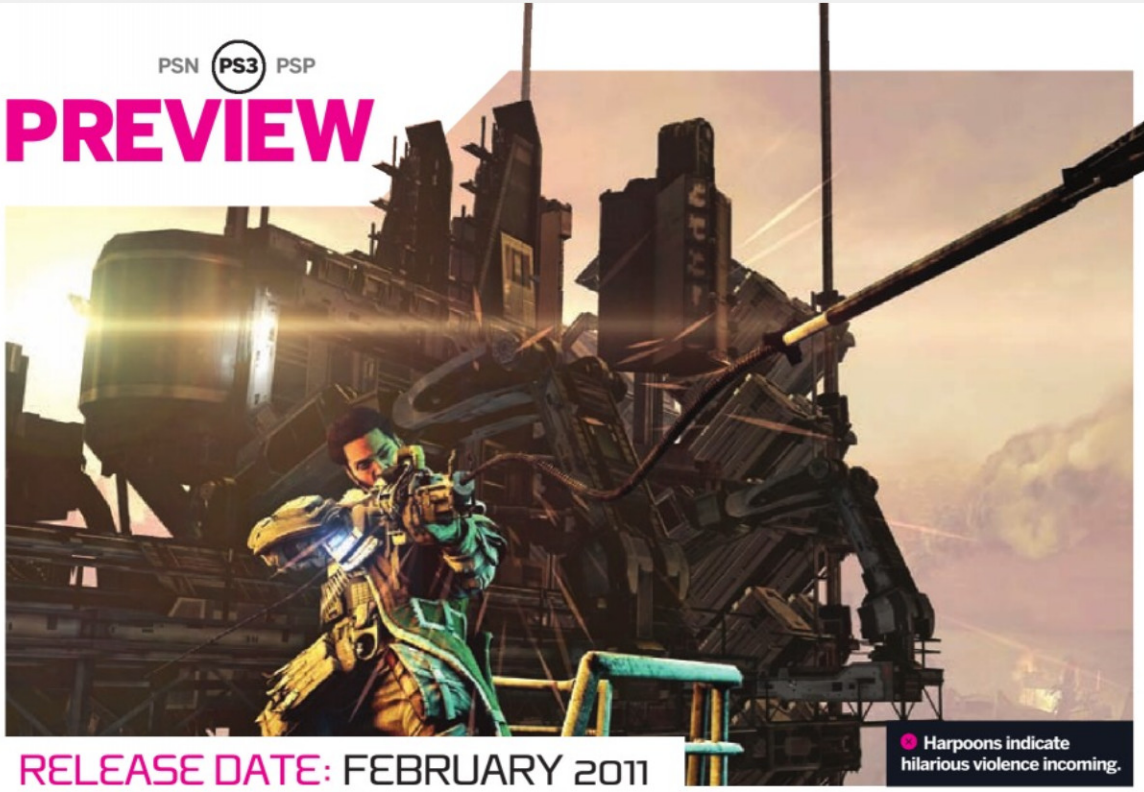
Drake's Fortune had Gabriel Roman, *Among Thieves* had Harry Flynn – if *Uncharted 3* doesn't have a backstabbing Englishman then something has gone wrong. **ODDS: 5-4**

ONDAINSAKRE

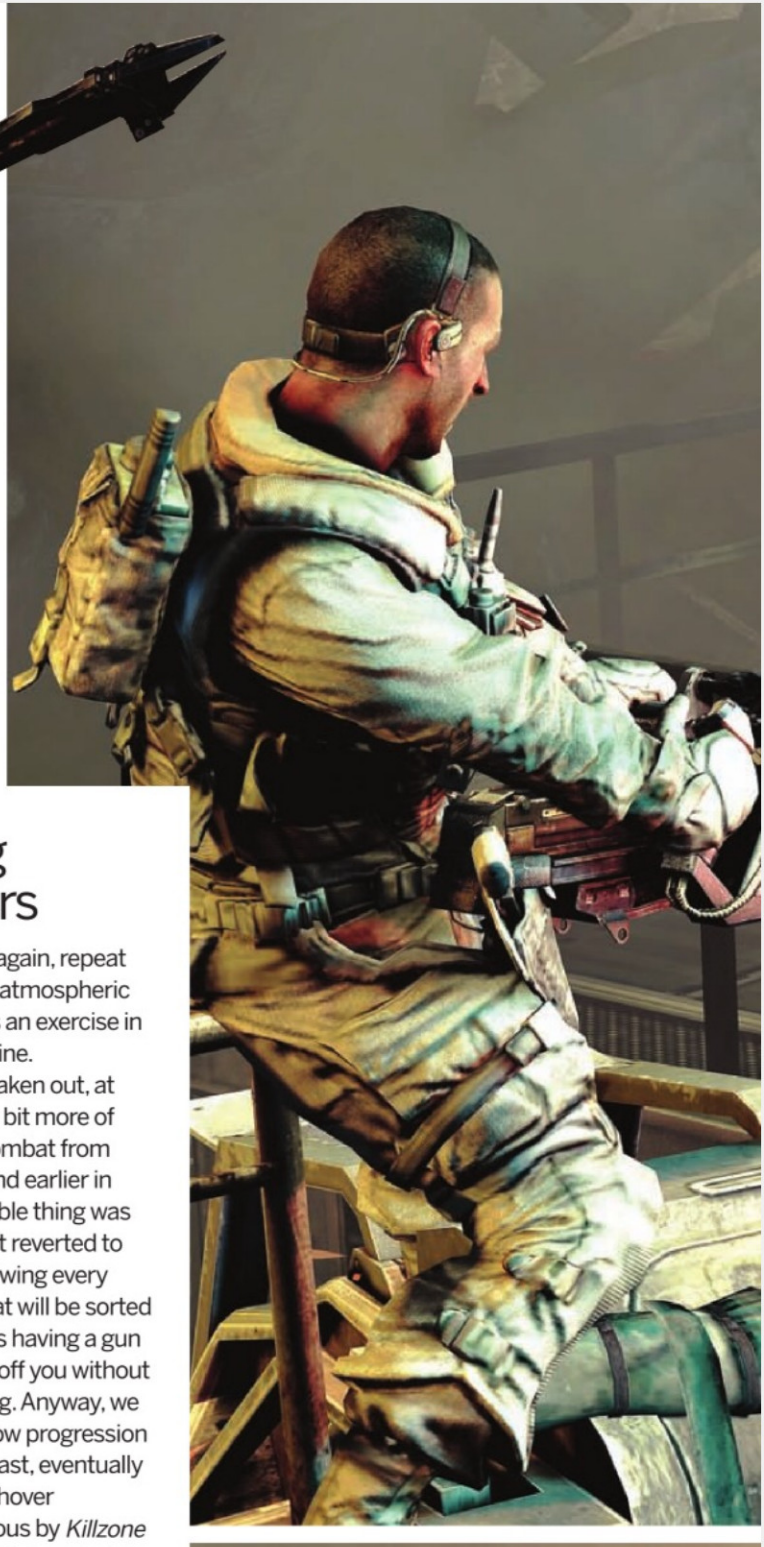
We suggested this in our review of *Uncharted 2*. It looks like Naughty Dog don't have the sense to listen to amazing ideas, the fools. Oh well. **ODDS: 500-1**

NAZIS

What would an *Uncharted* game be without Nazis? Well... an *Uncharted* game without Nazis. We expect them to show up, though. **ODDS: 2-1**



Harpoons indicate hilarious violence incoming.



RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY 2011

Killzone 3

Now featuring walking tower blocks with lasers

PS3 We were sent a reasonably brief preview version of *Killzone 3* to muck about with, to take in its atmosphere and reintegrate ourselves back into the world of Rico, the Helghast and all that other stuff. It hasn't even been that long since *Killzone 2* came out, so the memory of how the series is to play lives on strong.

All the same, though, it's strangely refreshing, even satisfying, to go back to the pitched gun battles, the snap-to, hold-the-button cover system and the right-stick-click iron sights way of going about things. The feel of *Call Of Duty* is indistinct – while functional, it's light, lacking in any major substance and does very much feel like you're aiming a hovering gun at bunches of enemies. *Battlefield: Bad Company 2* and *Medal Of Honor* bring some physicality to the presentation, and certainly feel more intense and involving than Activision's series – even if some don't rate them as highly as the *COD* games. But *Killzone* – and especially *KZ3* – has a feel like no other. It's *chunky*, it's *intense* and it's thoroughly atmospheric. Obviously how the game presents itself through a first-person viewpoint isn't what makes it the game it is, and this isn't a point we'd go into much detail on if we were working with less space here. But *Killzone 3*'s *feel* is something that few other games come close to, and rarely do you feel so put upon, so much like you're in an actual, proper war, than you do with Guerrilla's game.

It's handy, then, that our preview of *KZ3* started with the excrement hitting the airflow system. There's little build-up, just a short cut-scene to reintroduce some familiar faces – it picks up straight after the events of *KZ2* – and we're dumped right alongside a pitched battle. Snap-to cover, choose your shots, iron sights the hell out of everyone – yep, this is still *Killzone*. Stillzone. Making our way through familiar-looking entrenched combat positions we soon stumbled on the main focal point of the preview version: a rather massive walking tank-robot thing. Intimidating isn't the word.

The scale of this machine is amazing. Yes, we've been inundated with massive enemies in recent times, but there's something to be said for running about under the feet of an *absolutely huge* walking tank, especially in something as atmospheric as a *Killzone* game. Flitting from cover to cover, trying to avoid the mortar fire raining down on you, taking cover from the mounted machine guns tracking your every move – waiting until its main gun had fired felt like an age at times, but once it did, it became vulnerable.

> Rarely do you feel so put upon, so much like you're in an actual, proper war, than you do with Guerrilla's game

True, at this point it became pretty much a routine boss battle, including the ever-present shooting of the glowing weak spots. But the intensity – the overwhelming *sound* of the enemy – is something you just don't get in many other games. On paper it's a very simple, very straightforward fight – shoot, hide, take out smaller guns, shoot again, hide again, repeat – but with innumerable atmospheric touches it just becomes an exercise in excitement and adrenaline.

The giganto-mecha taken out, at least partially, leads to a bit more of the standard face-off combat from earlier in the preview (and earlier in the series). One noticeable thing was that the weapon loadout reverted to a pre-assigned one following every cut-scene. Hopefully that will be sorted for the finished game, as having a gun you want to keep taken off you without warning can be annoying. Anyway, we digress. Combat saw slow progression through waves of Helghast, eventually ending up riding on the hover transports made infamous by *Killzone 2*'s PS3 demo. This was the power trip of the preview. Held back, in constant danger and generally being killed a lot by the still-surviving massive walker suddenly took a back seat to the act of strafing the gigantic bastard with mini-guns. Again, on paper it can be simplified thusly: on-rails, shoot the red guns, shoot the glowing weak spots, shoot more red guns, shoot the other glowing weak spot, shoot some *more* red guns, shoot the bridge, win. But – again – there's no denying the effect of *Killzone 3*'s atmosphere on the whole experience. Intense to the point of being overwhelming, this is a power trip in the art of power trips – and while it does go on a bit long, leaving the player shooting on autopilot, it proved a fine way to end what had initially been a battle against the odds. Angry blokes (and woman) with bad hair: 1. Massive stompy robot of death with laser the size of a housing estate: 0.

Once the shortish demo was over with we jumped straight back in, this >

This lassie didn't make too many appearances in the preview.

Gary didn't like hitchhikers.

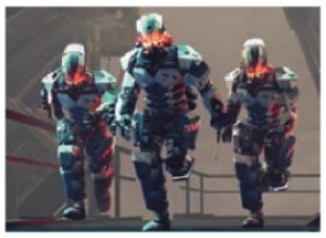
FOR SCIENCE!

KILLZONE 3 USES 3D to good effect, but the tellys are still expensive. We've asked science to tell us whether or not you should fork out on the back of *Killzone 3* alone. This is what science said, in graph form:

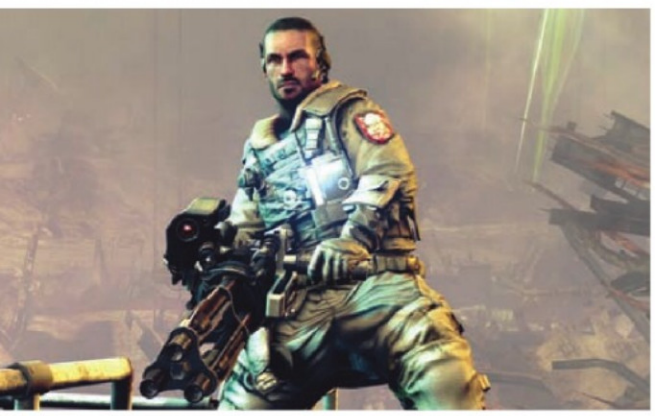
PREVIEW

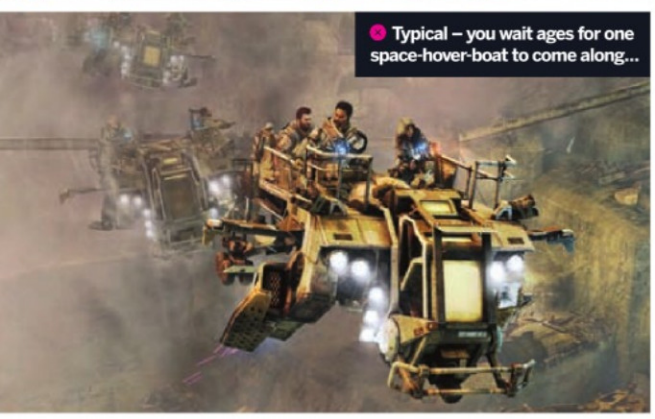
MOTION EMOTION

Waggle and flail to shoot people

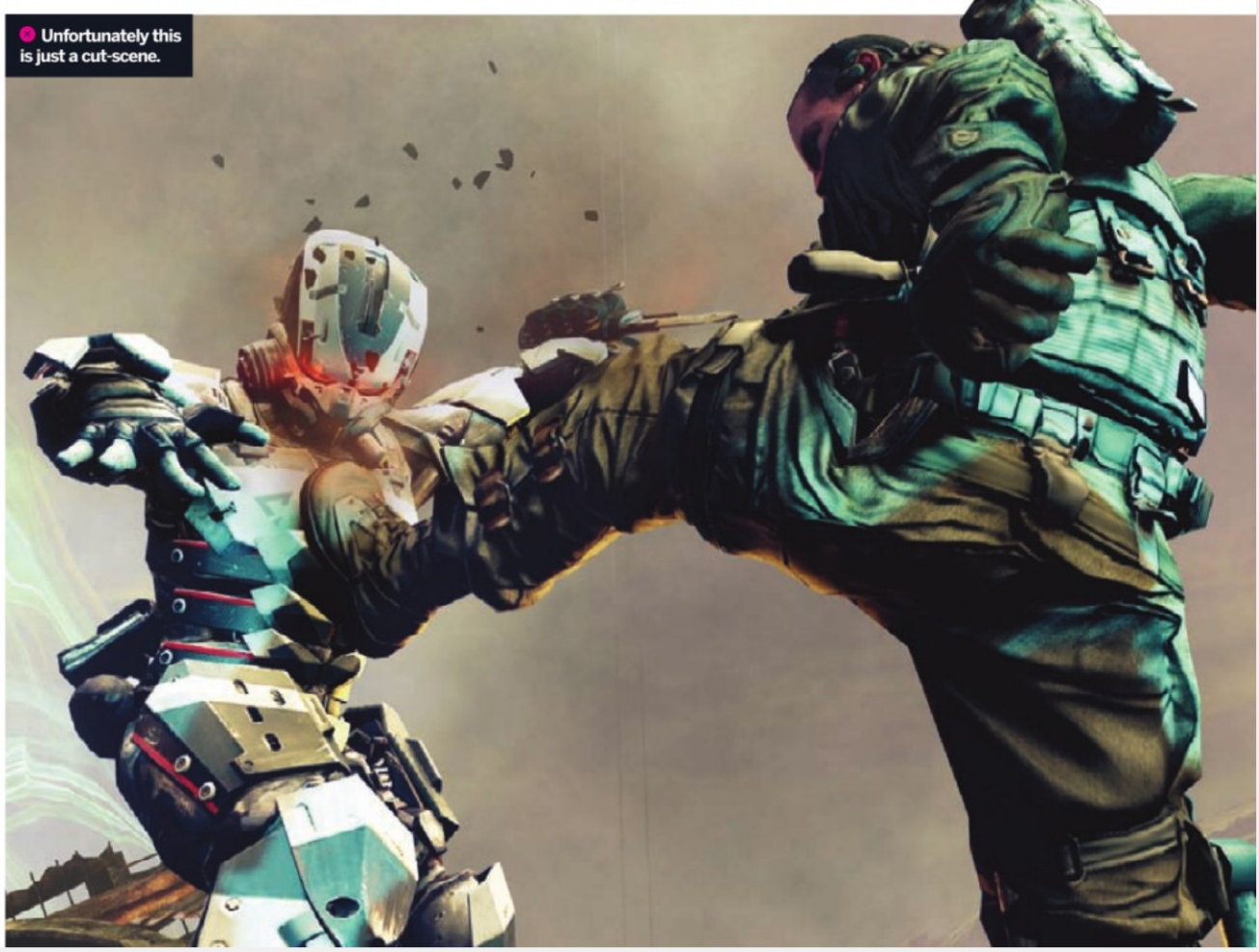


MOVE CONTROLS HAVE been added to *Killzone 3*, as most of you probably know by now. We were able to play with the waggle stick in the act of shooting future-Nazis in the face (translation: the preview code had Move functionality in it). How well does it work? Okay, actually. It's as expected, with the main controller aiming and turning, and the sub-controller navigating. It differs in the fact that sensitivities for various elements can be changed, meaning you can change it from something that doesn't work well to something that *does* work well. It's a miracle.





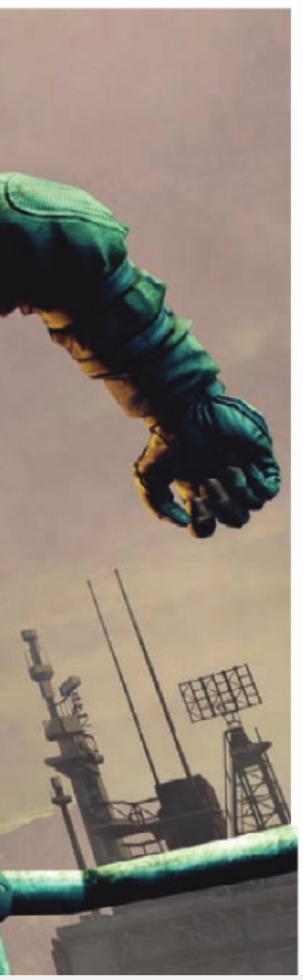
Typical – you wait ages for one space-hover-boat to come along...



Unfortunately this is just a cut-scene.

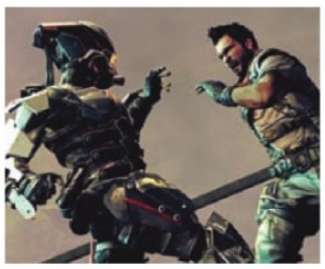
Killzone is good at chaos, that's for sure.

It's reasonably big.



UP CLOSE

And not personable



GETTING INTO CLOSE combat with a Helghast trooper offered up another surprise in our playthrough of *Killzone 3*. Namely that, rather than simply hitting him with the butt of our gun, we could twock him on the chin like normal before swiftly jabbing a blade in his eye. Oh, and twisting it afterwards, for good effect. After seeing everything there is to see in games – and a bit more – we have to admit it's refreshing to have something pop up like that and genuinely shock us. If only a bit, and if only a few times before we become desensitised to it. Obviously.

> time in co-operative split-screen. It's always an interesting one to look at – split-screen has taken a back seat to online multiplayer in recent years, and it's easy to forget that a lot of split-screen games have seen detail levels drop sharply or other perfomance-related issues negatively affecting the overall experience. Well, that just doesn't happen in *KZ3*. While there are noticeable areas of empty black space on each side of the screen, generally speaking things run well – it looks as good as the single-player game, as far as we could tell, and we only saw the performance drop once through the whole demo. It's certainly not the game's main selling point, but it's a fine addition and more than welcome – if only so we can relive the days of 'accidentally' shooting each other in the back (yes, friendly fire is on) before reviving them and repeating the process. Ah, the mature approach to gaming. This, combined with the multiplayer we have already tested extensively makes us hopeful for the future of the social gaming side of this game – it's good to play together, and *Killzone 3* lets you play with mates online and in the hope. Happy days.

Story-wise we haven't seen a great deal, but we do have the promises from Guerrilla to work with. Namely, that it will continue immediately from where *KZ2* left off, that it will be at least a little more light-hearted and that the swearing will be toned down. The preview code had its fair share of cut-scenes but not enough for us to really form a cogent opinion on the whole thing – apart from the fact that there does indeed seem to be a lot less swearing. Well, a lot less ridiculous, unnecessary swearing, at least.

Where would we be when talking about *Killzone* without going into some detail about the look of the game? Yes, we've talked atmosphere – incredible – we've talked sound – *loud* – and we've talked feel – satisfying. But on a fundamental graphical level, does *Killzone 3* impress? We were suitably blown away by

It looks stunning, plays well and got our pulses racing more than we expected

KZ2, expecting it to look far worse than it ended up being, so it's both surprising, yet unsurprising, that number three is one of the best-looking games we've ever seen. This isn't hyperbole, this isn't getting caught up in the rants of the fanboys – this is an opinion shared by most, if not all, who have seen it: *Killzone 3* is absolutely stunning. It's not the most imaginative of designs, we'll be the first to accept that, but it's not trying to be. The design won't appeal to everyone and will be derided by some as being 'army men doing army men things in army men combat' (or something wittier, you never know), but we'd find it hard to accept someone saying this is anything other than a stunning game to look at. The use of colour is wide, though muted; character detail is impressive and realistic, though still fairly individual; the game holds up well even when pumping out all of this detail, all of these fantastic particle effects and these physics-mad reactions by scenery to being shot – even when the engine has to cope with huge, pitched firefights, overshadowed by a robot tank the size of a town (note: possible exaggeration) it holds up. It doesn't slow down. It keeps on going. Simply making something look nice is only part of the battle, but what we've seen of how *Killzone 3* holds up so well it looks as if Guerrilla is well on its way to winning the war.

Our cumulative experience of *Killzone 3* has covered most, if not all, aspects of the game so far. We've played single-player, multiplayer, online, split-screen, 3D and with Move. It's still too early to really form definite opinions on the game – for all we know it could end up being three hours long and comprise exactly the same cover battle repeated ad nauseam. It won't, but the point stands in that we still aren't in a place to judge, even with many hours already pumped into the game. With that caveat firmly in place, let it be said: we're really looking forward to *Killzone 3*. It looks stunning, plays well and got our pulses racing more than we expected it to. Could it be PS3's definitive shooter? Right now, we don't know. But we're certainly not writing it off just yet.

Killzone 3 is being developed by Guerrilla Games. Check out **www.killzone.com** for more details.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

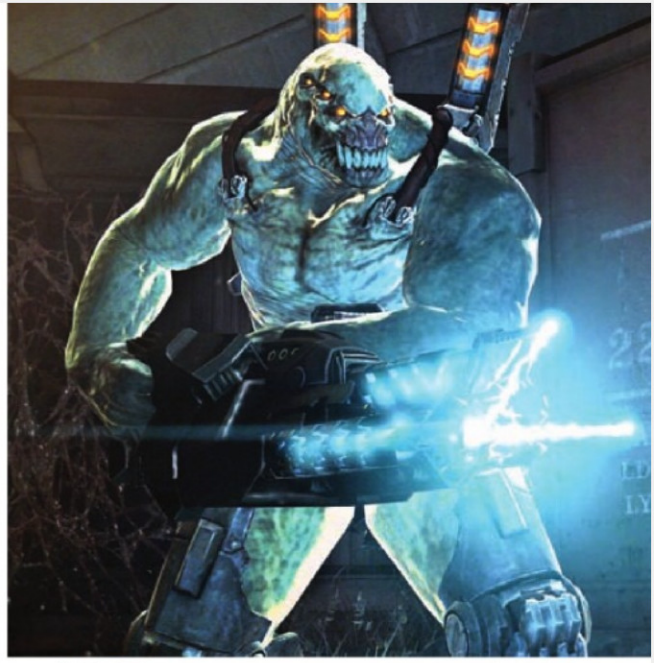
- It's really good looking. Hard to believe, but it is.
- Oozes atmosphere from every stinking sweat gland.
- Plays a chunky, meaty, stodgy game and plays it well.
- The split-screen co-op is the stuff of legend. Almost.

READ ME

Guerrilla didn't make *ShellShock 2*, the sequel to the original *ShellShock: Nam '67*. If it had, we probably wouldn't pay attention to the dev any more.

PREVIEW

The agile Longlegs are proof the Chimera has come on leaps and bounds since *Resistance 2*.



The Chimera has split into two separate factions; militaristic and feral. Thankfully they don't get on.

PLAY'S EXTREMELY EARLY RESISTANCE 3 WALKTHROUGH

How to get from Oklahoma to New York

KNOWING WHERE THE game starts and ends, with the aid of web mapping apps, we were able to bring you this early walkthrough for *Resistance 3*.

- Climb out from the rubble, kiss your wife on the lips (kids on the forehead) and head north out of Patterson Rd for 59 mi, avoiding Chimeran death squads.
- Turn right onto the turnpike ramp towards Tulsa while avoiding Chimeran death squads.
- Look for a signpost to Memphis, and follow it for 30 mi while still avoiding Chimeran death squads.
- Come across a human outpost and ask them for directions to Chicago/ Indianapolis. Help them defeat a Chimeran death squad.
- Once given the info you seek walk in the appropriate direction for 600 mi.
- Continue on to Ohio while avoiding Chimeran death squads.
- Turn right a bit so that you're facing Pittsburgh and continue walking for 375 mi.
- Continue down Varick Street and walk for 0.5 mi.
- Take a left towards Canal St and walk for 0.3 mi.
- Turn right at Broadway, and you've arrived at your destination.
- Locate the key to mankind's survival.

(Wait a minute, aren't sections of the game taking place on a train and most definitely aboard a boat? – Ed) Oh, yeah... rats!

© Google Maps

The US under Chimeran rule doesn't look like a particularly inviting place.

RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

Resistance 3

All your race belongs to us

PS3

As sure as we are that the sky is up and the ground is down, we'd already accepted that any earth-shattering gameplay reveals on newly announced games from the VGAs would be on the sparse side. And would you know it, following a series of new, but mostly rendered and live-action trailers interspersed with some unintentionally amusing award presenting, we were all saying 'I told myself so' soon after the event had ended.

That said, fans of Insomniac's *Resistance* franchise who tuned in to glean some fresh info about the fourth game in the series, did get it better than most – as the latest trailer for the game premiered some actual bona fide gameplay.

The in-game section of the trailer showed the game's new central protagonist Joseph Capelli, aboard a rickety fishing boat, accompanied (it seemed) by Dr Malikov and bottles of the 'Hale Vaccine' – the supposed cure for the Chimeran virus. It doesn't take long before his fog-choked vessel is ambushed and Joe is battling Chimera, including the all-new 'Longleg' strain. Though this particular part of the game has already been revealed to us in screenshot form, seeing it in action certainly gave us some assurances of the new direction Insomniac is taking the latest episode: putting aside the overblown, gung-ho environment of the second game, to tell a story that is altogether bleaker, more focused and, weirdly enough when you consider the setting, a little more liberated.

Resistance 2 certainly closed on a bit of a downer. Just to recap, Nathan Hale may have succeeded in saving at least a portion of the day by stopping Daedalus and destroying a large chunk of the Chimeran Air Force, but all hopes of humanity driving the Chimeran threat from Earth were soon dashed when the viral menace could be seen increasing its fight – and taking an incurable grip over Nathan – during the game's final moments.

With Nathan now removed from the franchise, it's Capelli, the man who was forced to put a bullet in his head, who becomes the main protagonist. Set in 1957, four years after *Resistance 2*, the fight has been lost and the US has now become a stomping ground for the Chimera. Chimeran death squads have chased human survivors into hiding, with many forced to live underground. With the military resistance now defeated, it seems all chance of any kind of a rematch is gone – well, that is until the supposedly dead Dr Malikov believes he's found something in New York that could turn the battle. It's this revelation that causes an initially reluctant Capelli to bear arms once more, when he decides to make the treacherous trip from his hometown of Haven, Oklahoma to the now-rotten Big Apple to secure it and provide a better future for his family.

In terms of new things *Resistance 3* will be bringing to the table, it's a mixed bag of new ideas and a return of features that were absent in *Resistance 2*. Perhaps the biggest change in terms of gameplay is that there is now a larger emphasis on NPC interaction, said to come in the form of Capelli working alongside small groups of resistance fighters that he encounters on his journey. There is also an interesting change to the world and the Chimera themselves. Chimeran flora will appear from the ash and ruins, and the Chimera have now splintered into two distinct factions: militaristic and feral. With allegiance to neither side, the feral kind will prove hostile to both humans and militaristic Chimera. And given that Insomniac is re-servicing both the graphics and AI for *Resistance 3*, we assume that this odd class divide will be something players will have to take tactical advantage of.

Weapons in *Resistance 3* have also been rethought. Dropped from the second game but making a return here is the Weapon Wheel, which will give players far more choice over the arsenal they wish to take into battle. In addition to this there will be new selections of alien weapons to complement old ones such as the Bullseye and Marksman, and they can now be upgraded, too. Finally, multiplayer has been carefully rethought as well, with *Resistance 3* offering a more progression-based multiplayer experience, as well as a two-player on and offline co-op campaign whereby Joe will be accompanied on his mission by another of Haven's survivors.

While the world of *Resistance* has certainly received its fair share of criticism in the past, there's no denying the franchise has always offered gamers polished, solid and entertaining shooters. Insomniac is certainly making all the right noises that it's fully aware of all the areas that require a bit of tinkering. If it succeeds, not only are we confident fans will be kept contented, but some fresh new recruits will be persuaded to open their wallets and donate their time to the resistance later this year.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Insomniac is aiming to make this the most impressive and deep *Resistance* title to date.
- Clearly listening to fans, popular elements absent from *Resistance 2* will make a return.
- Insomniac's aim is to hit a balance between character and action-driven stories.
- New Chimera foes to face and better interaction with non-playable characters.

READ ME

It would be false to call *Resistance 3* a reboot, but Insomniac is overhauling some core elements to make this the most diverse game in the series.

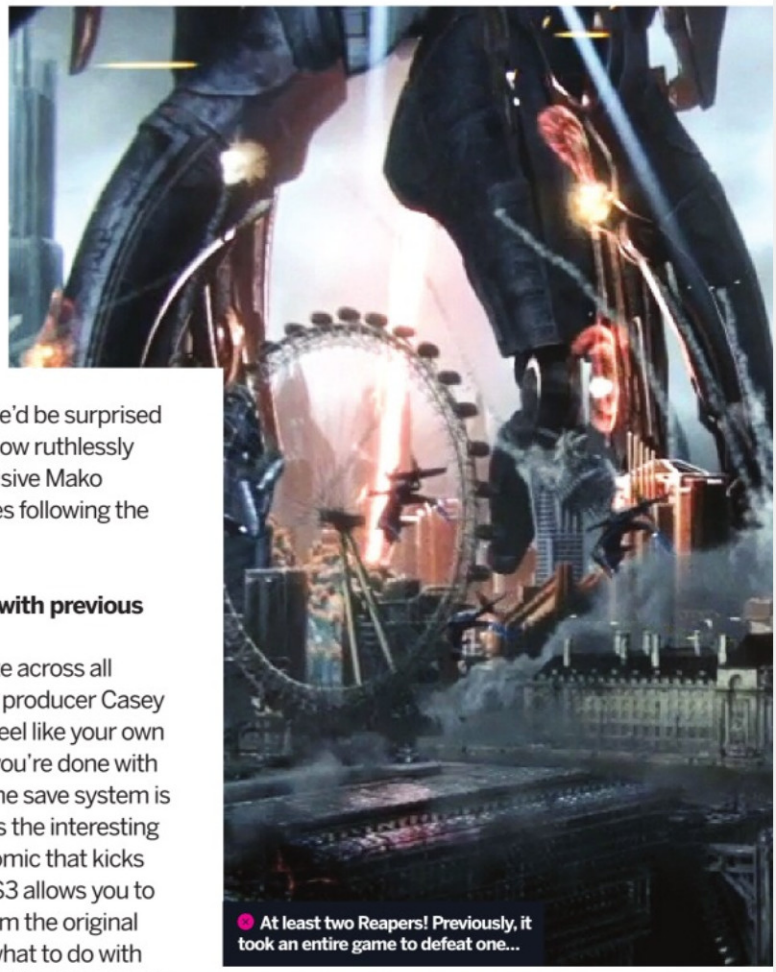
Resistance 3 is being developed by Insomniac Games. If you like the sound of how the game's shaping up you can find out more at **www.insomniacgames.com**

PREVIEW

RELEASE DATE: Q4 2011

Mass Effect 3

London calling to a faraway town...



At least two Reapers! Previously, it took an entire game to defeat one...

So it's finally been announced then?!
Yes, it has. Which may not be a big surprise to you seeing as *Mass Effect* was always planned as a trilogy, but that didn't stop BioWare pretending it didn't know the third game existed. "We have said it's a trilogy, so it's a good guess that the third one's coming," said BioWare CEO Ray Muzyka previously when asked about *Mass Effect 3*. Well, yes, it is a good guess because THAT'S WHAT A TRILOGY MEANS.

Stop shouting.
Sorry. So it finally announced *Mass Effect 3* with a trailer, that initially seemed like it didn't give much away, but dig deeper and the details are there. First, at least part of the game will take place on Earth. We hear a London accent in the trailer, we see Big Ben and the London Eye, therefore we know your *Mass Effect 3* travels will take in London at some point. Second, there seem to be geth running around on earth, spotted when we see a soldier sniping to protect a woman who is trying to save a young boy by dragging him to safety. Will this soldier be part of an earth defence force (ahem) against the geth? Will he be part of your squad?

Why are you asking the questions?
Because BioWare hasn't said yet.

So, who are we fighting in this one?
The Reapers! *Mass Effect* was essentially you versus Sovereign, the single Reaper who had indoctrinated Saren and manipulated him into opening the Citadel portal to dark space. You stopped Saren and destroyed Sovereign but the threat of the Reapers loomed large, especially with Sovereign's "Our numbers will darken the sky of every world" threat. *Mass Effect 2* side-stepped the invading Reapers storyline to focus on the Collectors, with the ending sequence showing a colossal fleet of Reapers. *Mass Effect 3* now focuses on the Reapers and judging by the sequence of them stomping around London, you'll have to fight them head-on.

> We see Big Ben and the London Eye, therefore we know your Mass Effect 3 travels will take in London at some point

What else can we expect?
Following feedback from *Mass Effect 2*, BioWare will try to tilt the action-RPG balance back towards RPG while including 'more combat options' and 'more complex enemies'. BioWare's Christina Norman previously admitted that the mining mini-game was the part of *Mass Effect 2* that "nobody liked".

Given her comment, we'd be surprised to see it return, given how ruthlessly BioWare culled the divisive Mako sections from the series following the original *Mass Effect*.

How will it crossover with previous *Mass Effect* games?
Your decisions resonate across all *Mass Effect* titles, with producer Casey Hudson saying it will "feel like your own universe" by the time you're done with *Mass Effect 3*. The same save system is also in place. But here's the interesting part. The interactive comic that kicks off *Mass Effect 2* on PS3 allows you to make big decisions from the original *Mass Effect* (such as what to do with Wrex, the Rachni Queen) but ignores the smaller ones such as how you deal with Shepard's fan and the news reporter. It will be interesting to see what happens with those smaller decisions. Otherwise, remember when you play *Mass Effect 2* that your big decisions will have an impact on *Mass Effect 3*...

Anything else?
As a side note, we really want the soundtrack to recapture the synthy atmosphere of the original. It's still one of the best sci-fi soundtracks we've ever heard. If anyone disagrees, we will fight them. Personally. And that's a promise.

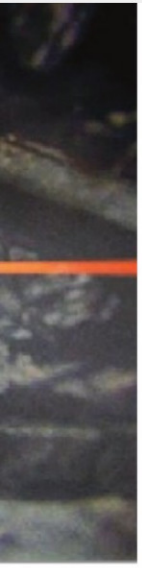
Mass Effect 3 is being developed by everyone's favourite Canadians, BioWare. **Masseffect.bioware.com** is your digital den for further updates and info.

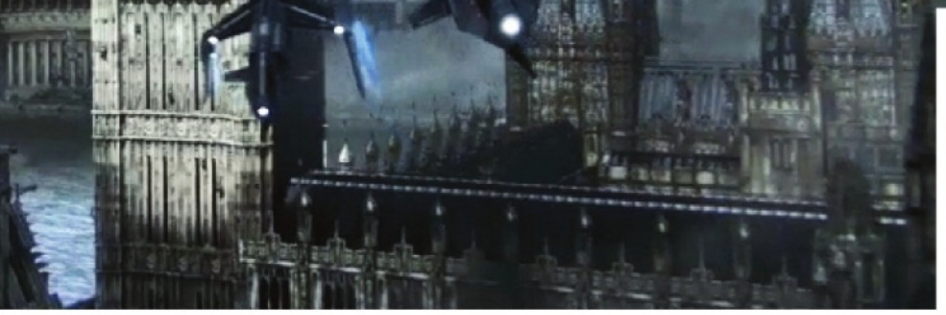
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It's *Mass Effect*. Read pages 92-93 to find out why you should care.
- *Mass Effect 3* will be the final part of BioWare's trilogy! Oooh.
- It'll be super polished and one of the best-looking games on PS3
- It's *Mass Effect*. Read pages 92-93. Again. Go on, read them.

READ ME

Director Casey Hudson says *Mass Effect 3* will be the easiest to develop, as BioWare no longer has to worry about continuity into the next one...





FAQ

REINVENTION

The trouble BioWare faces

THE WHOLE CROSSOVER from *Mass Effect* to its sequel caused a problem, in terms of continuity. While continuing the storyline, which fans wanted, BioWare also had to sneak in an option to create a character, which new players needed. They came up with the Shepard-is-dead-wait-no-let's-rebuild-him angle for *Mass Effect 2*. But how the hell are they going to do it for *Mass Effect 3*?

Just another fun day out in the capital's tourist spots.

Shepard watches the carnage from afar before walking off.

It's actually possible to wash your car at several map locations, should a rally race take its inevitable toll...

RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY

Test Drive Unlimited 2

Cos the last one wasn't unlimited enough...

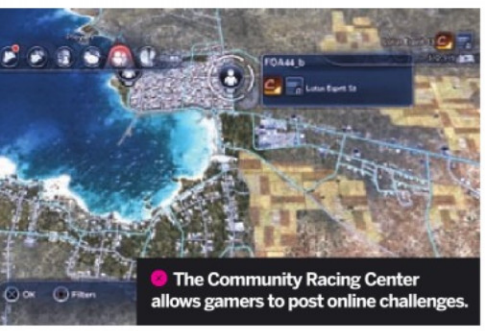
PS3

For all its grace and old-world charm, *Gran Turismo 5*, we can safely assume, seemed to Eden Games a rather quaint and traditional sort. With its neat, fenced-off tracks and strictly defined progression, it's at least somewhat the product of a bygone gaming age. Nowadays gaming's very much concerned with the here and now, as EA's Autolog system drags gamers by the nose through the endeavours of their far superior friends, with leaderboards offering near-infinite auxiliary challenge. Appropriately enough, given the medium, there is soon to be a third way. A reality in which progression depends as much on how many friends you might make as it does nailing braking zones. One in which you might level up by wearing the correct kind of hat. Whether such an experience points to years of interconnected bliss or some bizarre autosport/Farmville hybrid, packed with microtransactions, is a matter open for debate. One thing's for certain, though. We doubt you'll have seen a racing title before that opens quite like *Test Drive Unlimited 2*.

You see, this update opens to sun-drenched beaches on Ibiza. High atop holidaymakers below, in the penthouse suite of some achingly perfect apartment block stands our hero, mired deep within a party scene. After being introduced to his wheels (via the first of many unsettling first-person cameos), it's off onto the dusty tracks, with no discernible objective. Rather than offering gamers a stratified set of tasks to tick off one by one, *Test Drive Unlimited 2* instead seeks to create a populated, aspirational universe around our central vain douchebag. Assuming all is well at the retail counters, the island your tyres are pushing this way and that will be populated ideally by players on your own friends list, or at the very least those of a similar rank, as opposed to entirely NPC drivers. The idea being that events can begin via means of an accidental meeting of acquaintances. For the William Few Associates out there, preset events exist, focusing on a relatively ingrained suite of licence tests to begin with, before branching out into championships and more random events, triggered by phone calls from in-game characters as you're lazily cruising around.

Rather than handing out trinkets of gold, silver and bronze then, Eden Games has prescribed a rather more broad definition of success. Generally speaking, exploration of any kind will lead to progress, through Ibiza's challenge at first and then back to the original title's setting, Oahu, Hawaii. Statistics covering race progress, social interaction, road discovery and collection will follow your avatar at all times, the latter covering more obvious areas such as garage breadth, but also a range of luxurious bachelor pads. Said property must first be purchased from an in-game 'realtor' and then can be perambulated, altering the décor to

Eden Games' plot revolves around a chance encounter between a Solar Crown racing TV presenter and her (sexy) valet.



The Community Racing Center allows gamers to post online challenges.

Vehicle damage is featured, though it rarely extends beyond scratching and a popped hood.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Players will receive two islands as their playground. Sadly, one's Ibiza.
- It's got dirt in it. Yes, that actually counts as one of the game's features.
- Well over 600 challenges await, even more if you're creative.
- Whatever Bob Hoskins says, racing's better than a phone call.

taste. More traditionally, score is dealt out for taking the road not travelled; one of several features *Test Drive Unlimited* owes a debt to Criterion for. After all, if you're offering gamers over 3,000 kilometres of road to tear up, there has to be some gameplay in there, somewhere.

Termed F.R.I.M., the additional feature bolted into every in-game vehicle offers players the chance to earn some crucial additional dollars simply commuting from one race venue to another. Through the performance of any jump, trick or near miss, a wad of cash can be earned that will build up over time into a figure quite substantial. One errant trip into the central reservation, mind, and that figure will fall to zero in an instant – the game itself lying in when to bank your money, and when to push that competence just a little bit further. Moving onto how vehicles handle at this late stage might seem a little perverse, but since capitalist consumption is the only real goal here racing automobiles can take somewhat of a back seat. Anyway, the model on offer lies somewhere between the bombast of a *Need For Speed* and *GT*'s meticulousness. In short, though braking is a swift process it still demands attention, plus differences between road surfaces feel more like some cad's switched the inertia button off rather than tyres crossing uneven ground.

Despite some reservations, however, there's certainly some appeal to this odd mixture of commercialism and competition, bringing with it emotions not unlike the turtling RTS player. It's going to take more than the addiction of accumulating currency to hold most boy racers' attention, mind. Sometimes, it's less about the Lincolns, and more about the Lincoln Continentals.

Test Drive Unlimited 2 is being pieced together by Eden Games. For more information, check out **www.testdriveunlimited2.com**

READ ME

***Test Drive Unlimited 2* sets players free in virtual re-creations of Ibiza and Oahu, allowing them to cavort with human players populating this space.**

NPC AI can occasionally throw a curveball your way. Such as commuters that don't recognise roundabout priorities.

Most events and purchase opportunities can be accessed from an impressive zooming map.

DOWN TO EARTH

Eden has a strange idea of the word 'fun'

FOR A VIDEOGAME based on driving exotic supercars in idyllic surroundings, things go a little bit classic rally online. That is to say, oddly exacting and, well, anorak-like. If you don't believe us, try these descriptions of genuine multiplayer events for size...

Follow The Leader assigns one driver the head of a multiple car team. Only this driver can see the eventual destination, and must deliver their colleagues to it in the quickest possible time while taking them through a number of checkpoints. At the end the process will start over, but this time with a different leader.

Keep Your Distance dictates that all vehicles must travel in a convoy, driving no closer than a defined distance and no further away than another defined distance to score points. If any vehicle drops out of this range no points will be scored, the goal being to total as many points over a race distance as possible. No, we aren't making this stuff up.

Chase mode brightens things up with in-game stats on crashes. When playing online, it'll allow those with the lowest number of misdemeanours to chase the others, with points awarded for evasion and catching their foes. Though undeniably a little more racy than its alternatives, considering it's up against *Hot Pursuit*... we'd be a bit worried...

Volition isn't talking about multiplayer yet, but it promises something special.

You can't blast through the rock walls. There need to be some limits.

Armageddon started out life as more of a horror than an action game.

RELEASE DATE: MAY

Red Faction: Armageddon

"I felt like destroying something beautiful"

PS3

Do you truly appreciate how impressive a game *Red Faction: Armageddon* really is? Perhaps when you glance across these pages you see a bald-headed space marine, generic alien enemies, dark brown subterranean levels, and linear game that's taken a step back from the open-world expansiveness of its predecessor. But look a little deeper – smash away at the surface with your Sledgehammer, or your Ostrich Hammer – and you'll find one of the most technologically remarkable games on offer today. Just think about it – how many other games feature a destruction system as advanced and detailed as Geo-Mod 2.5? None. Not one.

"Either they are smart enough to know what it would cost and say, 'no way, we're not going to spend the time and money and man years to build that', or they just think it's too hard to do," says senior programmer Eric Arnold, the brains behind Geo-Mod. "It's definitely a big sacrifice in terms of processing power. From the player's perspective it looks like there's less stuff there, but really there's ten times more stuff than any other regular game."

And he can prove it. While you're just looking at images of Darius Mason, grandson of Alec, shooting at enemies in what looks like some vague *Dead Space* copycat, we've seen the towers of data that hide behind each building; the swathes of code that simulate every falling brick and chunk of masonry; the vast lines of programming that inform the physics of every environment. These buildings aren't held up by stone or metal, they're held up by a seemingly infinite string of numbers constantly interacting as you blast your way through with a rocket launcher.

So make no mistake. This is one impressive game. Impressive, and damn fun to boot. But perhaps you still need convincing. Many gamers have criticised the decision to make *Red Faction: Armageddon* linear, claiming that it's a regressive step back for a concept that worked so well in the open-world setting. Furthermore, they've lambasted the decision to take the game underground; a catastrophic event has destroyed Mars's terraforming facilities, you see, turning the surface into a lightning-ravaged wasteland and forcing the people of Mars to live in underground caverns. To make matters worse Darius Mason has gone and accidentally released an ancient alien species from the core of the planet (how careless), meaning you're sharing that space with a rapacious alien horde that look like *Halo*'s Covenant and a Predator went and made babies.

But, if the levels we played are anything to go by, this is definitely *not* a regressive game. It's a title that's taken everything *Guerrilla* did

The Bezerker was the toughest enemy we faced in the game. Horns usually equal bad news.

so well and streamlined it, compacted it, and made an experience that's every bit as fun as its predecessor.

Let's start by addressing the issue of those underground caves. Yes, you're going to see a lot of brown, grey and black, but the research and reference points displayed on Volition's studio walls suggest there's going to be far more variety in *Armageddon* than in the unimaginative palette swapping of *Guerrilla*. We saw images of real-life underground caverns dense with stalactites and stalagmites. We saw images of huge glaciers, accompanied by notes commenting on how light refracts through ice. We saw photos of caves hidden deep under the Earth, where crystals can grow to the size of houses. We saw images of volcanoes and hot magma, and plumes of grey smoke casting upwards against the red molten rock. We also saw imagery of deserts, hurricanes and vicious tornadoes, relating to the portions of the game that will be spent on Mars's surface, ravaged by sandstorms and dark lightning crackling from the overcast sky. And this is all imagery taken from our home planet. With a little imagination and some poetic licence, Volition has enough space in those underground environments to come up with some truly impressive sights.

And as for the linearity – you hardly notice it thanks to the Geo-Mod system. In fact, if anything *Red Faction: Armageddon* feels like pockets of open, freeform gameplay that just happened to be tied together by a singular path.

Each cavern – which can range from small, claustrophobic spaces, to yawning, empty hollows – is filled with a variety of buildings, walkways, towers, piping, ventilation, canisters and more that's all held together by the Geo-Mod system. Volition has done an excellent job of making its environments look like real, lived-in spaces – places that were once filled with a bustling hubbub of refugees but have now been emptied by the alien threat. It's rather remarkable – Volition has created a world that's both believable and playable, a feat of balancing that's the sign of a wise and experienced developer.

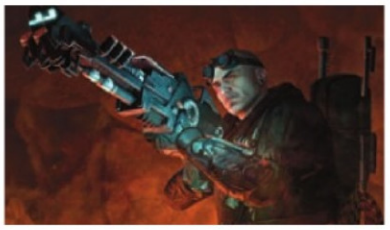
A developer that also delights in giving you the tools to destroy all of its hard work. Many of the weapons in *Armageddon* we've seen before. There are the usual grenade launchers, explosive mines and RPGs, and a range of less incendiary weaponry like dual-wielded magnums and assault rifles, but it's the new toys that are the most impressive.

> So make no mistake. Armageddon is one impressive game. Impressive, and damn fun to boot

First, there's the Plasma Beam, a charged rifle that, once full, emits a thick ray of energy for several seconds not unlike a Proton Pack. Like the Nano Forge it disintegrates anything it touches, meaning you can drag it across the foundations of a building and burn them out from under it, then watch as the structure topples forward and smashes onto the floor below.

LEVEL UP

Darius kits himself out to take on the alien invasion

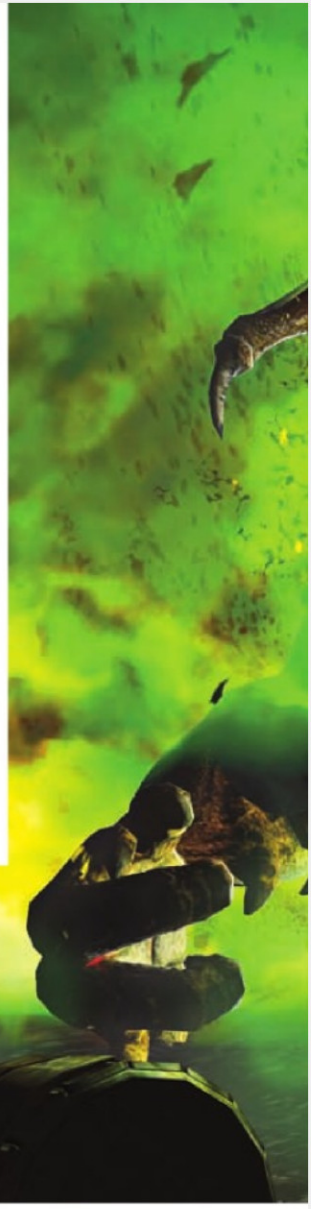


DARIUS CAN COLLECT Salvage which can then be used to augment his abilities. This RPG-lite system is constructed of a series of rings – the inner rings contain smaller upgrades and unlocking enough of these allows you to progress towards the more powerful outer ring abilities.

NEW TO RED *Faction* are Darius's Nano Forge abilities, which are useful for getting out of sticky situations. Activating Bezerk increases Darius's weapon power, Energy Shell drops a temporary shield and Shockwave sends out a pulse of power that throws enemies backwards.

PREVIEW

Expect to see some pretty big set pieces throughout the game.



Geo-Mod takes a third of *Armageddon*'s processing power before work has even begun, making it quite the technical achievement.

> But it's the Mag Gun that's *Armageddon*'s real pièce de résistance. A cross between *Crackdown*'s Mag Grenades and *Just Cause 2*'s grappling gun, it's so deceptively simple, and yet easily the most versatile weapon in the game. Your first shot will anchor one connector to a destructible object, and the second to another. Whatever scenery the second connector is fastened to will be immediately torn from its holdings and whipped across the environment towards the first, crashing into whatever's there with devastating force. It may sound a little cumbersome for a weapon, but take our word for it. It's not.

The Mag Gun is quick and easy to use, and its applications are many. You could fire one connector to a foe, then another to an explosive canister, and watch the item fly across the level into its ugly face. Perhaps you could tear away the section of wall an enemy is clinging to, causing it to fall to its death. Or, even better, you could attach one enemy to another and watch them smash into each other. Or you could catapult an enemy into the air. Or, you could use the Mag Gun to completely destroy an environment just for the hell of it. It's absolute, freeform, experimental carnage.

You may question exactly how a linear game can handle such wanton destructibility. In a linear game your objective is clear – it's usually ahead of you. So what happens if a wayward RPG accidentally brings down a vital staircase, ladder or walkway? Not to worry, Volition has you covered with the augmented Nano Forge. As in *Guerrilla* it can disintegrate objects in seconds with a teeming army of nanobots, but this time those little mites also have the power to rebuild. So, any object you bring down in the game you can immediately bring back by holding down L1, or tapping it to send out a burst of energy that restores the collapsed architecture surrounding whatever it sticks to.

It's almost as fun as the destruction itself. During our time with the game we were allowed to play in an open sandbox level with all the weapons unlocked and infinite ammo. We spent an hour destroying every single brick we possibly could, before repairing it all with the Nano Forge, simply because it was just so satisfying to do so.

Armageddon's not completely free of problems, though. The initial impression of Darius Mason as a non-specific character – with little more to him than a bald head and muscles – seems pretty apt so far. Furthermore, although Volition is placing greater emphasis on story – which it intends to tie into the broader *Red Faction* universe through comic books and the SyFy TV movie *Red Faction: Origins* – we found ourselves completely apathetic about the narrative. We just wanted to smash things up.

From a gameplay perspective, too, things can sometimes feel a little cramped. One section that saw us pilot a mech through a deserted underground marketplace quickly became a little too hectic, the incoming horde of enemies, our rocket fire, and the resulting destruction making the screen look like a scrambled mess of scenery and explosions. Setting this moment in a more spacious environment would probably have worked out better.

> We found ourselves completely apathetic about the narrative. We just wanted to smash things up

But these are just minor footnotes. *Armageddon*, more than anything else, is just good, riotous fun. There's something innately exhilarating and cathartic about destroying something, and, like *Guerrilla* before it, it's around this central conceit that *Armageddon* is constructed. The character design may be generic, and initial screenshots somewhat forgettable, but the foundations of this game are anything but.

Red Faction: Armageddon is being developed by Volition, Inc. Find out more at **www.volition-inc.com**

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Geo-Mod 2.5 makes smashing buildings into dust even more fun.
- The Mag Gun is already a contender for best weapon of 2011.
- The game's linearity means we'll get a better story this time.
- There will be no more tedious driving from point A to point B.

READ ME

Will *Armageddon* feature the Ostrich Hammer? Volition wouldn't tell us, but it did say – with a knowing smile – that what it has planned is even more ridiculous, and is "likely to upset PETA".

BUGGIN' OUT

Here's a quick look at Red Faction's new insectoid enemies

DARIUS MASON IS a careless young chap. It was bad enough that the residents of Mars have been forced underground, but then he has to go and accidentally release an ancient alien species into those cramped, claustrophobic environments. So far we've seen four different varieties of these creatures. There's your standard Ravenger, and then the smaller and faster Creepers. More powerful enemies come in the form of the Wraith, which can disorient Darius with a piercing shriek, and the Bezerker, which is basically a muscular tank. Volition promises many more variations, including one enemy type that will use the environment against you.

"But the invitation said 'dress to impress'!"

Volition has a *Red Faction* 'bible', which contains the entire history of the universe.

A BOONE TO THE SERIES

Jim Boone, Producer

Did you anticipate a negative reaction to the choices you made for *Red Faction: Armageddon*?
We knew going linear could be a controversial decision. But ultimately, when we talked to people about what the things they liked about *Red Faction: Guerrilla* were, we found that people loved the destruction, the combat, the vehicles, but no one would talk about the driving. So we asked, do we really want to spend the time creating this really large world where you're constantly driving from point A to point B, or do we want to bring everything together so it's a continual sequence of the things people loved the most about *Guerrilla*? We feel like we've really taken a step forward by just focusing on the areas that people loved the most.

How are you making the subterranean environments feel different?
We wanted to do environments that had a distinct visual theme between them. So something as simple as the oranges and yellows of magma versus the ice area with blues, versus the rock area where it's browns and blacks, we really got a lot of different palettes. We've got large expansive caverns with stalactite and stalagmites and all these beautiful things we have on this planet. You can only imagine what kind of things that might exist on Mars.

Originally the game was more horror based, why did you move towards a more action-orientated approach?
We originally talked about carrying the horror theme throughout the entire game. But every area you come into, did we want it to look like this horrific thing had happened where all these people were massacred and ripped apart with blood everywhere? We decided no. Rather than try to repeat that horror theme over and over, we wanted to vary the game throughout and present different atmospheres and vibes. We thought it told a better tale that way.

PREVIEW

We see Lara, we see caves, we think of that T-rex fight.

RELEASE DATE: TBC

Tomb Raider

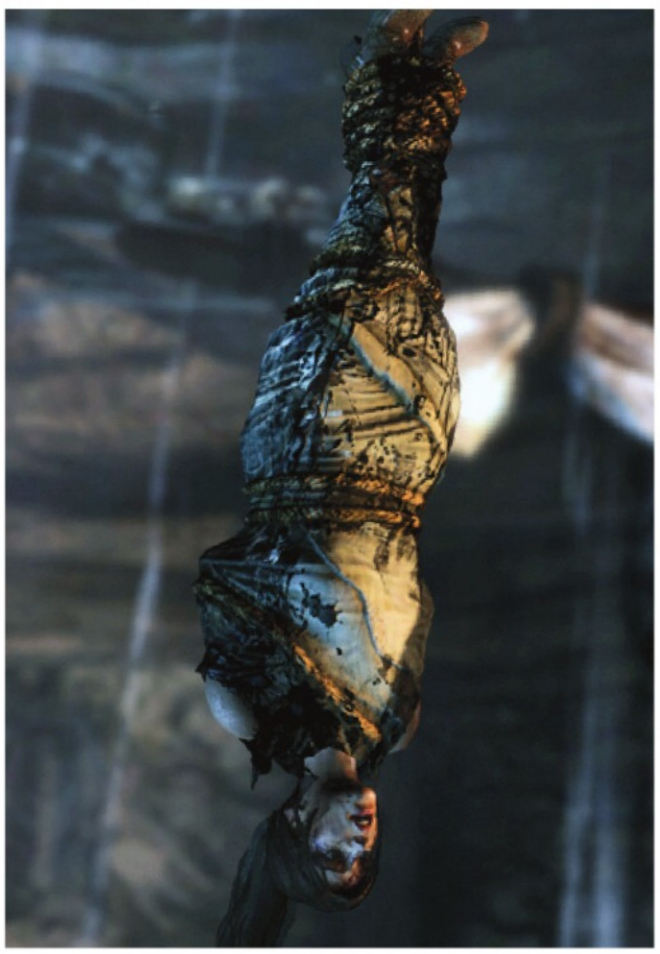
Don't call it a comeback

PS3 So here she is! Witness the glory of 21-year-old Lara Croft, washed up on a mystery island off the shore of Japan after the research vessel she was on ran into trouble and ended up shipwrecked. It's a free holiday but she doesn't look like she's enjoying it much. Typical miserable British tourists.

We're bored of using the words 'dark' and 'gritty' to describe anything that has mud and blood but look at it. So dark! So gritty! Possibly as a result of Lara getting into a scrape in every single screenshot on these pages but also because this predates guns-n-khaki Lara. In this series reboot, she has to use what's lying around her and her own wits to survive the bizarre island she's landed on. Sounds good and it deserves bonus points as it breaks away from the old yay-exploring-sigh-combat routine the series had started to fall into.

Deserves bonus points as it breaks away from the old yay-exploring-sigh-combat routine

Tomb Raider is being cooked up by Crystal Dynamics. Check out **tombraider.com** for updates, screenshots and extra bits.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It's a reboot! And it looks like it'll be a genuinely different *Tomb Raider*.
- It won't continue the godawful *Legend/Underworld* storyline.
- Backtracking? Gone thanks to a 'campfire' system (like *Red Dead*).
- Combat sounds like it'll be different to any previous *Raider*.

READ ME

Lara is shipwrecked on a mysterious island and confronts both physical and mental challenges to escape.

The tourist industry on the Japanese island still has a lot to learn.

As usual, Lara will end up battered and bruised.

TIME FLIES

We've seen young Lara before

WHILE THIS MIGHT be the first reboot of the series – *Tomb Raider: Legend* was more of a revival, given the dismal *Angel Of Darkness* almost killed it – it's not the first time young Lara has sprung into action. In *Tomb Raider: Chronicles*, released on PlayStation in 2000, you played as a 16-year-old Lara Croft alongside Father Patrick Dunstan in Ireland. Still, this is a reboot, so it doesn't have to pay attention to previous Lara escapades. Maybe.

PREVIEW

RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY

Marvel Vs Capcom 3

Everyone meet the unusual suspects

PS3 We've been following *Marvel Vs Capcom 3* in great detail since its announcement, so instead of boring you with the general game details again we've decided that we're now going to bore you with details on the game's individual characters. Who says we don't give you a choice here at **Play**, right? You lucky people.

We've concentrated on the most interesting characters from the Capcom and Marvel side, which is why we haven't covered Spencer. Yawn. But among these characters there are already some diverse playing styles, from the nippy rushdown of X-23 to the lumbering beast that is MODOK who fills the screen with projectiles.

Having played *Marvel Vs Capcom 3* extensively during our lunchtimes, we can now confirm that the fighting feels close-up and personal, projectile spamming isn't quite as prevalent as *Marvel Vs Capcom 2* (Arthur is as close as it gets) and our diet has shifted towards cheese sandwiches because it's easier to take a bite between rounds. And you don't have to quickly wipe your hands before going back to playing. Things like that really matter.

> Projectile spamming isn't quite as prevalent any more

Guessing at tiers is impossible when the game is this early and not all the characters have been revealed yet, but we would be surprised if Dante wasn't a heavy favourite online (think of him as the new Ken), while MODOK and Arthur's wall of projectiles play style will stump new players. We figure that most will ride those characters to easy wins. It will be interesting to see how things eventually play out, but here's the initial lowdown!

Capcom is the one steering **Marvel Vs Capcom 3's** insanity in the right direction. See more at **marvelvscapcom3.com**

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Insanely fast with the emphasis on big combos.
- Accessible for button-bashing beginners.
- The character roster is incredibly varied.
- Watch the screen fill with lots of pretty colours!

READ ME

Three vs three brawler that sees Capcom allstars fighting Marvel allstars. Or, as we overheard, 'is that Captain America vs Okami dog?'

ZERO

Why you'll use him: One of the easiest characters to initially get to grips with, thanks to lightning-fast speed and easy combos. Extremely mobile, Zero can unlock the sternest defence with the right assist backing him up.

Why you won't: With his teleports and 'clone' Super, Zero is easy to begin with but pretty tough to master. Zero also seems to have as many gimmicky moves as useful ones.

ARTHUR

Why you'll use him: He's got the most instantly pleasing design out of the entire roster, thanks to his trademark jump. Furthermore, Arthur's projectiles mean he can play a nasty keepaway game. He's *MVC 3*'s version of Cable.

Why you won't: He has no dash and a jump that's easily telegraphed, which means Arthur struggles to force comebacks on the opponent if he loses the lead.

X-23

Why you'll use her: She's a nippy Wolverine, with lightning-fast mix-ups and a Level 3 Super that turns her invisible. She has no problems nipping in for combos, plus she can combo into a Super from a command grab.

Why you won't: If X-23 does get caught while she's zipping around, she gets squashed like a bug. She takes a lot of damage, making her a high-risk, high-reward character that's good for comebacks but not holding a lead.

MODOK

Why you'll use him: His wall of projectiles is almost as annoying as Arthur's, with barriers, electrical balls that track and laser beams to pin the opponent down. He doesn't ever need to get close to do damage.

Why you won't: Like Arthur, he struggles to take the lead if the opponent doesn't have to force himself through walls of projectiles. MODOK also struggles to get away from foes who get close, leaving him open to rushdown characters.

C.VIPER

Why you'll use her: She's kept her *Super SFIV* potential but in an accessible game engine. Translated, this means she has tricks and shenanigans along with stupidly powerful combos. She even has her Focus Attack (Heavy+Aerial) from *SFIV*!

Why you won't: Her special moves aren't great, which means you'll have to really get your teeth into her combos to get the most out of her. This is a learning curve some won't bother with.

T.BONNE

Why you'll use her: T.Bonne has plenty of reach, which is more useful in *MVC 3* than it was previously thanks to the up-close nature of the fighting. It's also why her Servbot projectile is more useful now, so she can lock down the screen.

Why you won't: It was her assist glitch that made her useful in *MVC 2*. That's fallen by the wayside so you're left with a fairly cumbersome character who struggles to keep up with the pace.

WESKER

Why you'll use him: He's impossibly cool and his teleports give him lots of mix-up potential when teamed with various assists. His Level 1 Super is also really good for punishing characters who leave themselves open, as it quickly covers the screen.

Why you won't: Wesker is unorthodox and needs Supers to make him scary to fight, as foes won't want to leave themselves exposed. Higher learning curve than most characters.

SHE-HULK

Why you'll use her: With her command run follow-up to moves, she can sneak in on opponents. She also has the most impressive looking Level 3 Super and her flip attack (down+Heavy from the air) is extremely useful.

Why you won't: She's pretty slow and her Level 1 Super is pretty useless. Players won't be scared of her until she has her Level 3 Super ready and her command run feels gimmicky. Overall, she's tricky to use effectively.

MAGNETO

Why you'll use him: Magneto is deceptively fast and also keeps his *Marvel Vs Capcom 2* moves, though there's no Psylocke assist to back him up. He can rushdown opponents with ease and has one of the game's best assists. And he has a cool hat.

Why you won't: He's good at everything but doesn't really stand out in any particular area. His combos could be better and his projectile game could be stronger. Solid but unspectacular and definitely not as strong as in *Marvel Vs Capcom 2*.

DORMAMMU

Why you'll use him: With versatile supers, a 'black hole' projectile that fills the screen, meteor showers and some powerful combos stemming from his projectiles, Dormammu can fight effectively from distance.

Why you won't: He's slow and tall, making him an easy target for someone like Arthur or MODOK to lock down with projectiles. He also tends to whiff on his Aerial Rave combos more than most, which cuts down on his comeback potential.

PREVIEW

RELEASE DATE: Q3 2011

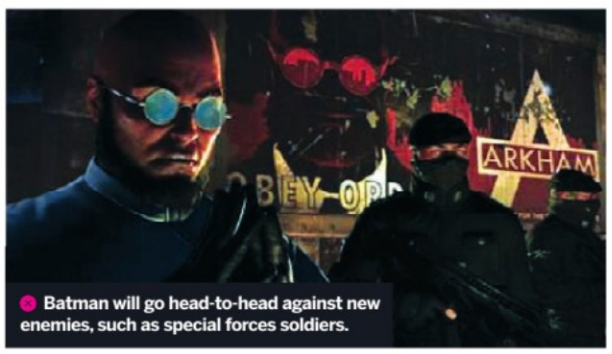
Batman: Arkham City

Here comes a new challenger

FAQ

Story and tone in *Arkham City* is far darker than those in *Arkham Asylum*.

Gameplay moves away from the asylum and onto the streets and rooftops of Gotham City.



Batman will go head-to-head against new enemies, such as special forces soldiers.

PS3 **Oooh, Batman. So, what's new with the Dark Knight?**

Not much. Warner released a new trailer showing Batman doing battle with some special forces soldiers on one of Arkham's rooftops in the rain. It's hard to know exactly what role they'll play although having special forces will add a new flavour of enemy to the goons Batman was wailing on for most of *Arkham Asylum*. We also see one of them being interrogated by Hugo Strange after failing to take down Batman.

Hugo Strange?

Oh right, that's the other thing and it's slightly more interesting. Hugo Strange was revealed as one of the new adversaries for *Arkham City*, with the psychotic doctor prowling around a darkened interrogation room talking to the returned soldier. He's not the kind of doctor who'll send you on your way with a Mickey Mouse plaster over your cut and a lollipop, let's put it that way.

So what's his special power?

He doesn't really have a special power, but knowledge seems to be his trump card. His official character history sees him running a private hospital to administer injections to wealthy people, turning them into monsters as he ransacks their fortune. When Bruce Wayne checks in, Strange discovers he is Batman. As far as *Arkham City* goes, he's running the show with Quincy Sharp's blessing and we figure he'll be the new 'overseer' in the way Joker was for *Arkham Asylum*. Yet the hook about knowing Batman is Bruce Wayne remains, as Hugo Strange taunts the Caped Crusader about knowing his darkest secrets...

Anything else?

The Hugo Strange reveal increases the chance of Scarecrow making a comeback. The two worked together in the *Batman* comics and there was the cut-scene at the end of *Arkham Asylum* showing Scarecrow's hand coming out of the water. Catwoman also thinks Strange is working with Joker. Given Hugo Strange specialises in turning people into brutes, it would follow on nicely from the Titan storyline in *Arkham Asylum*. Strange should be an interesting addition given he will be Batman's equal in intellect if not necessarily brawn. And hey, rather him than Calendar Man, right?

Rocksteady is the crew at the helm for **Batman: Arkham City**. You can find out more at **batmanarkhamcity.com**

CHAIN GANG

Tweaking the fighting system

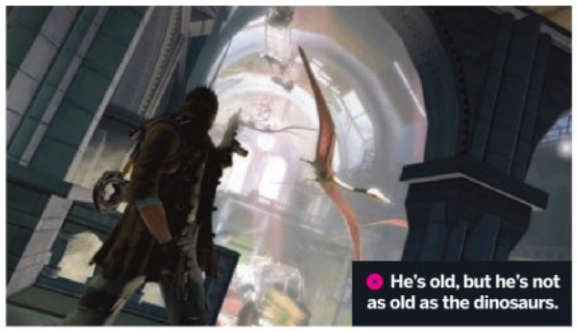
ONE OF THE strongest aspects of *Arkham Asylum* was it addressed the traditional weakness of the genre – the combat was really good. It was mostly about using timing to chain attacks together, presenting mashing that's so prevalent and giving room for a countersystem to breathe. For the sequel, we expect to see the same system but with more moves and (hopefully) more counters in place.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Without the confines of an asylum, the action shifts to the city.
- Catwoman, Two-Face, Harley Quinn and Riddler have all been confirmed.
- *Arkham City* will be much darker in tone than *Arkham Asylum*.
- *AA* was the surprise success of 2009, this one should be even better.

READ ME

The cut-scene at the end of *Arkham Asylum* would randomly show either Scarecrow or Killer Croc's hand grabbing the Titan crane.

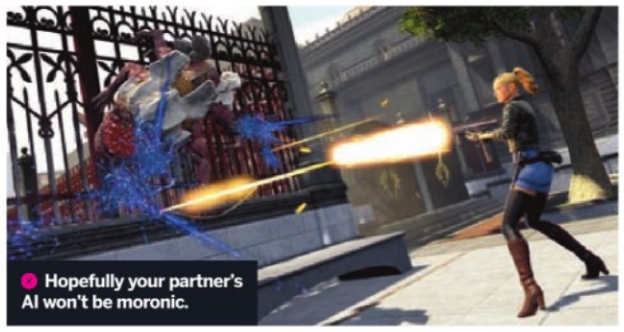


He's old, but he's not as old as the dinosaurs.

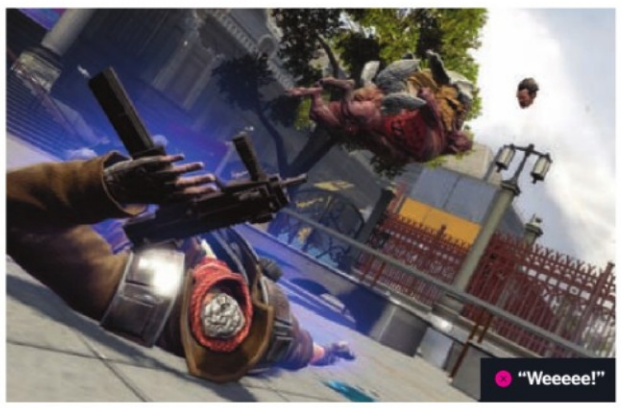
UPDATE

How can you not chuckle?

It looks... well, it looks alright.



Hopefully your partner's AI won't be moronic.



"Weeeee!"

RELEASE DATE: TBC 2011

NeverDead

Who wants to live forever?

PS3

We keep on reading the same example to sum up the extent of *NeverDead*'s main character and the immortality that burdens him. He's in a building surrounded by enemies, he's outnumbered – but he's immortal. He can shoot out the ceiling, causing it to collapse on his enemies, and himself, but once he's pieced his body back together he emerges relatively unscathed. Relatively in that the enemies are dead, and he cannot die.

Granted, it's the one example we're seeing repeated about *NeverDead* wherever we look, but who among you can honestly say that's not quite interesting? Sure, it sounds a bit daft and we haven't heard any other examples of how these powers could be employed, beyond Bryce throwing his limbs in order to attack from range or distract enemies, but it's nothing like what we're hearing about other games. The general look of *NeverDead* might not inspire awe, but as soon as you realise half these screens have a de-limbed player character, well – that's when interest perks up a bit.

We've been promised an interesting clash between Eastern and Western design, such is the development process of an idea originating in Japan being transferred to Britain. It might end up having no effect whatsoever on the finished product, but it could make all the difference. We know how bored we are of standard third-person shooters, and *NeverDead* could kick the genre's arse off.

We are approaching *NeverDead* with the cautious optimism that always surrounds a Rebellion game. We've been burned by the studio in the past, but this looks creative enough to at least offer something we haven't seen before. And if rolling around levels as a disembodied head is half as funny to play as it looks, we're in for a treat.

NeverDead is being developed by Rebellion. Check out **www.konami.com/games/neverdead** for more details.

NEVERDIE

Except for sometimes, when you do

NEVERDEAD CAN, APPARENTLY, be played in both single-player and multiplayer co-op. In single-player Arcadia is controlled by the AI. Two-player, however, she is under the control of the second player. This opens up some interesting questions, such as how this all functions with a non-immortal second player.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- How many other games let you roll around as a disembodied head?
- Even if it's meant to be quite serious, it's still funny.
- It's a unique concept, and it's something of a risk, too. We like that.
- We're still waiting for Rebellion to remind us of how good it is.

READ ME

There have been many immortal videogame characters through the history of gaming, but none have stood out as much as IMMORTO. We made him up.

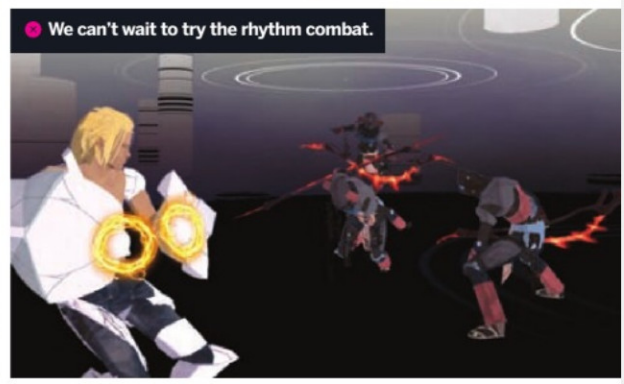
PREVIEW

FIRST LOOK

Enemies come in all shapes and sizes.

It almost looks like a painting.

The visuals are simply stunning and incredible in motion.



We can't wait to try the rhythm combat.

RELEASE DATE: APRIL

El Shaddai: Ascension Of The Metatron

The what of the who?

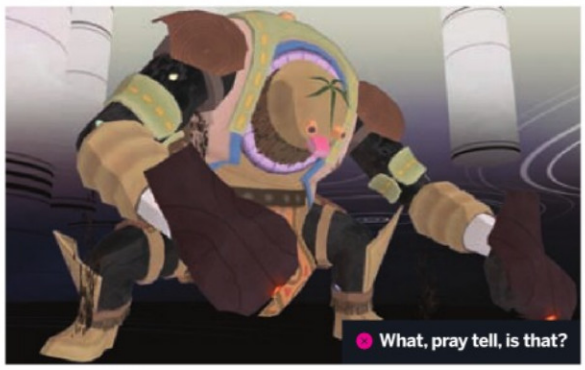
PS3

As you read this we're standing next to a brick wall gearing up to bang our heads off it, while a broken record skips infinitely on the office record player. It's funny that whenever the videogames press harps on about the next big game coming out of Japan – be it *Shadow Of The Colossus* or *Okami* – for months on end until they hit the stores, the message never seems to sink in. These games come out, we give them glittering praise, then very few of you go out and buy them. We're not dishonest, or trying to trick you; we just want you to fall in love with great games worthy of your attention. You don't hate love, do you?

Anyway, *El Shaddai* is the same deal, coming from game designer Takeyasu Sawaki. His CV boasts such achievements as *Devil May Cry* and the previously mentioned *Okami*, so you'd be right to assume that this is quite a looker. *El Shaddai* focuses on priest Enoch, who must enter an ethereal realm and prevent the apocalypse. Along the way he'll platform his way through beautiful cel-shaded worlds and lay the smackdown on demons with some brutal combat skills.

Ah, yes, the old death-knell; we said it's cel-shaded. Well don't let that put you off, because *El Shaddai* comes from the same school of thought as *Devil May Cry*. The combat is said to operate off a one-button system that demands good rhythm, which is an idea so fresh and intriguing we simply can't wait to give it a go. There also appears to be a second dimension that plays home to Enoch's guide Lucifel, and four powerful Archangels. With a projected spring release date we shouldn't have to wait too much longer to get some hands-on time with *El Shaddai*.

El Shaddai is being developed by Ignition Entertainment. Check out **http://elshaddaigame.com** for more details.



What, pray tell, is that?

THE CRUSADER'S MULTI-TOOL

Comes with everything you need to prevent the apocalypse

ENOCH CAN EQUIP a pair of items known as Veils which can be used defensively as bracers or as offensive weapons. He can also crush enemies with them and use them as a shield. Given *El Shaddai*'s emphasis on single button, rhythmic combat, we reckon the Veils will be simple to use to keep combat flowing nicely.

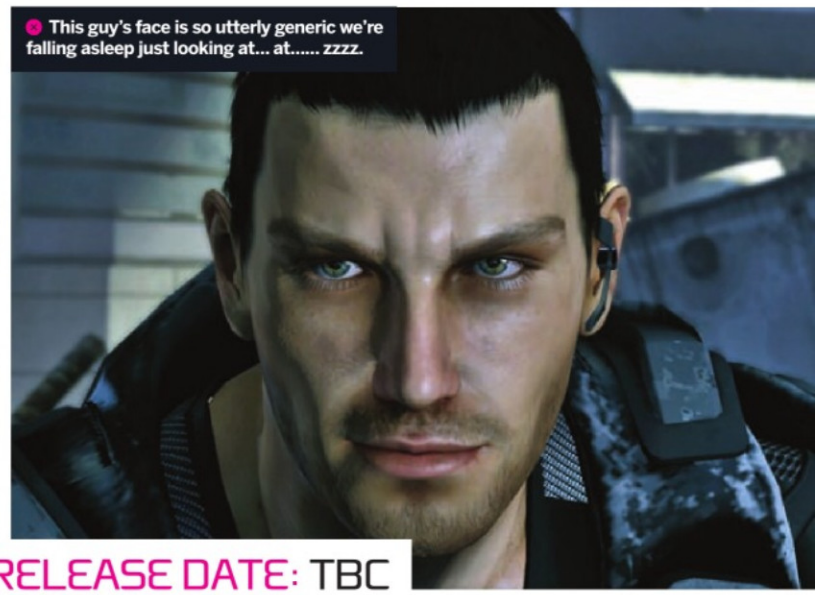
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- *El Shaddai*'s visuals look like an explosion in a paint factory.
- One-button combat with depth? It could work. 'Could', mind.
- It's a brand-new IP with fresh ideas, which is getting rarer.
- Enoch's hair is just a wee bit on the girly side. Which is fine by us.

READ ME

Enoch is a priest looking for seven fallen angels who hold the key to preventing a great flood that will end mankind. Yikes.

If you've played *Gears Of War*, then you'll know what we mean when we say 'Cole Train rip-off'.



This guy's face is so utterly generic we're falling asleep just looking at... at..... zzzz.

The enemies look more like *I, Robot*'s Sonny than more traditional videogame robots.

RELEASE DATE: TBC

Binary Domain

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PS3

The most interesting part of the pre-rendered teaser trailer for *Binary Domain* isn't the explosions, massive robots or muscle-bound characters that dominate the first three minutes. If anything those three minutes are clichéd, generic nonsense, forgotten the minute you've seen them.

No, the most attention-grabbing part of the trailer occurs at its end. On the upper levels of a Tokyo whose lower levels are being torn apart by a human-robot war we see a mother, calmly cooing to her baby as it falls asleep. The camera pans out and we see that the woman's entire lower half is mechanical. She's a robot.

It's this that saw us raise our eyebrows in curiosity. *Yakuza* creator Toshihiro Nagoshi is the man helming the project, and he says that, "The keyword we have for this project is 'Life'... When you hear sci-fi you may think of cold, clinical environments but with *Binary Domain* I wanted to combine this with deep human drama."

So, while the player will control a peacekeeping squad of soldiers battling robots on the lower levels of Tokyo, they'll soon start to ask difficult questions about the choices they make. Are the robots becoming more human, or are the humans becoming more like machines? Where does humanity start and end? What defines the human soul?

The most important question is will Nagoshi deliver such philosophical themes with any of the subtlety or intelligence required to do them justice? If the first three minutes of the trailer are anything to go by – full of tiresome machismo, terrible dialogue and stock characters – the answer is no. Not at all.

We've seen two Japanese shooters attempt to make an impact on the Western market this year. *Vanquish* sits at the top of the scale, the abysmal *Quantum Theory* on the very opposite end. If *Binary Domain* goes all out on brawn rather than brains, our guess is that it'll sit right in the middle of this scale, on the part labelled 'utterly mediocre'.

Binary Domain is being published by Sega. For more details check out the official website at **www.sega.co.uk**

This woman looks more confused than intense. Maybe it's because she's wearing such a weird top.

AAIIII!

Sega promises better AI for the game's AI

WE KNOW VERY little indeed about what *type* of game *Binary Domain* is, exactly. All we do know about how it actually plays is that Sega has promised an "innovative AI system" that will "make the battlefield a more compelling experience than ever before". We're used to this kind of PR fluff, though. That probably just means that the AI will take cover a tiny bit more.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It has robots in it. Robots are automatically good.
- The AI is supposedly the best thing ever.
- The game's themes sound genuinely interesting.
- Not a great deal else, to be honest.

READ ME

Apparently Toshihiro Nagoshi started dressing like a yakuza while making the *Yakuza* games. Perhaps he'll start dressing like a robot now.

PREVIEW

IN-DEPTH

Each character has their own story arc to follow, but there's lots of room for you to pick paths.

Magic spells and upgrades add amazing new attacks to your arsenal.

RELEASE DATE: JUNE

Dungeon Siege III

Hacking, slashing and slicing up fools

PS3

Does Obsidian Entertainment ever take a holiday? Well, some of them do we guess, but while the *Fallout: New Vegas* team is probably sunning itself on some isolated beach (or more likely starting a new project), there are others who must keep working. Take, for example, the team selected to bring *Dungeon Siege* to consoles for the first time in its history. Those guys aren't getting any rest at all.

But it's their own fault, because Obsidian was an integral part of bringing this project together, playing a part in series creator Chris Taylor being introduced to Square Enix and getting this sequel signed with the publisher. Taylor's Gas Powered Games couldn't spare the time to work on it, so in stepped franchise custodian supreme Obsidian to take up the reins. Off the back of its other releases like the recent *Fallout* game, but also going back to older sequels it worked on, this is a developer with a strong reputation for creating interesting and faithful adaptations of beloved series. In other words, if you're a fan of isometric action RPGs with lots of big axes and swords you'll be in hogs heaven with *Dungeon Siege III*.

But the big question is does it work on PS3, a format *Dungeon Siege* has yet to conquer? Thankfully, the answer is yes. With simple combat controls (⊗ is your all-round attack button with L1 acting as a stance/weapon changer) and a now familiar conversation wheel system there's nothing here PS3 RPG players won't be instantly familiar with. What we did rather enjoy though was the looting and hording. Every enemy you kill and every object you interact with is likely to drop some new piece of armour or money and searching each location for every last morsel of loot becomes compulsive.

Going around collecting stuff may not seem like the biggest leap forward, but it was fun all the same. The light nature of the dialogue and hammy voice acting helped create a laid-back atmosphere. We fully expect it to offer a greater challenge further into the game, though.

Obsidian Entertainment is taking the reins on **Dungeon Siege III**. Keep an eye on the official website for incoming info at **www.dungeonsiege.com**

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Easy-to-play, tough-to-master gameplay so newcomers should settle in quickly.
- Classic RPG action with all the swords and sorcery your little heart could desire.
- Expect all of Obsidian's usual strengths in terms of story and dialogue.
- Huge enemy spiders! That's what we've been missing and *Dungeon Siege* delivers.

READ ME

Like any great Western RPG *Dungeon Siege III* will have a multi-path story and a number of different endings depending on your choices.

Will you be a hero or a villain as you play *Dungeon Siege III*?

ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE QUEST

Side missions come thick and fast in Dungeon Siege

AN AREA OF *Dungeon Siege III* that we found particularly enjoyable and a little intimidating was the speed at which we were receiving quests from NPC characters and the quantity of them. Getting the balance right is obviously going to be a key priority, but the balance felt good in the early stages and promised no end of interesting objectives further down every road.

RELEASE DATE: SPRING 2011

Patapon 3

Is this the PSP's swan-drum-beat-song?

PSP

It's not too harsh to say that *Patapon 3* isn't going to bring a great deal of new to the series. In fact, it looks more like an expansion and extension to existing mechanics and features than anything approaching the True New we often demand from games. But we don't *always* demand it, and we certainly don't always demand it with the likes of *Patapon* – after all, it's original enough in its own right to simply refine a formula.

The tiny changes are as follows: the player character is now represented by a Super Patapon; backgrounds are deeper, more detailed, more varied and feel more alive; multiplayer has been improved upon to include infrastructure support for up to eight players, as well as more missions and modes of play; methods of customising your tribe have been modified; enemies are a bit different... sometimes.

It's not dismissive of us to say that isn't exactly a huge list of improvements that will make us drop everything we're doing and run all the way to the shops/PlayStation Network/our favourite online retailer to buy the game. Whenever it comes out. But this caution is always tempered by the fact that, well – it's *Patapon*. This is one of the best-looking, most charming and thoroughly fun series in existence on PSP. It's not a giant improvement on what's come before, but it is an extension of the drumbeat fun we've had before. Is that such a bad thing?

Patapon 3 refines, replaces and slightly improves on many elements. It doesn't drag the series forward in huge leaps and bounds – it's more a case of baby steps. We're unsure as to the real benefit of the third instalment, but we're not averse to welcoming it with open arms. It's impossible not to, anyway. PON PON PATA PON.

Patapon 3 is being developed by Pyramid. Check out **www.pataponpsp.com** for more details.

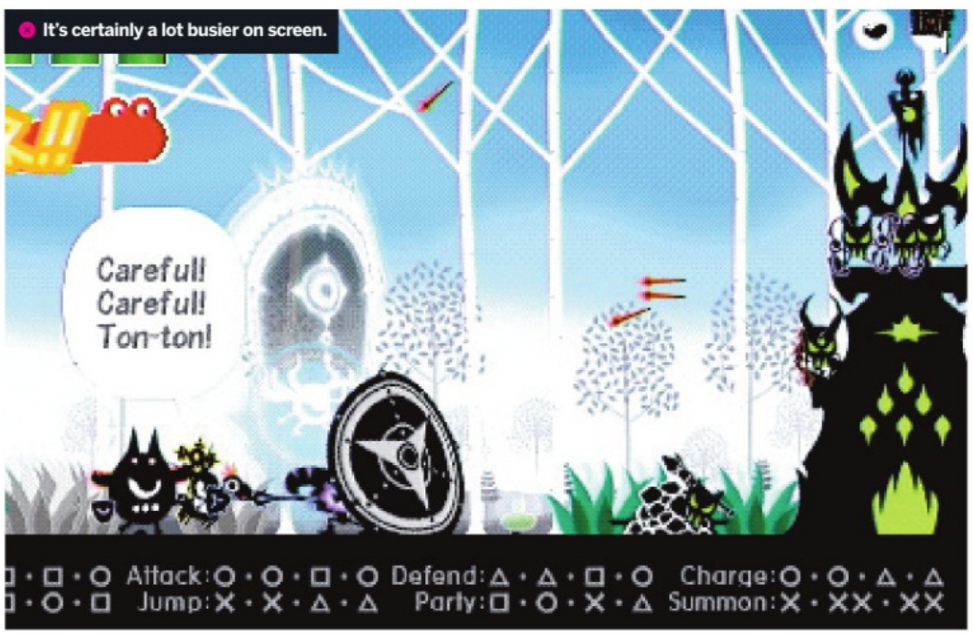
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Pata pata pata pon!
- Pata pon chaka don?
- Pon pon pata pon.
- PATA PATA PATA PON.

READ ME

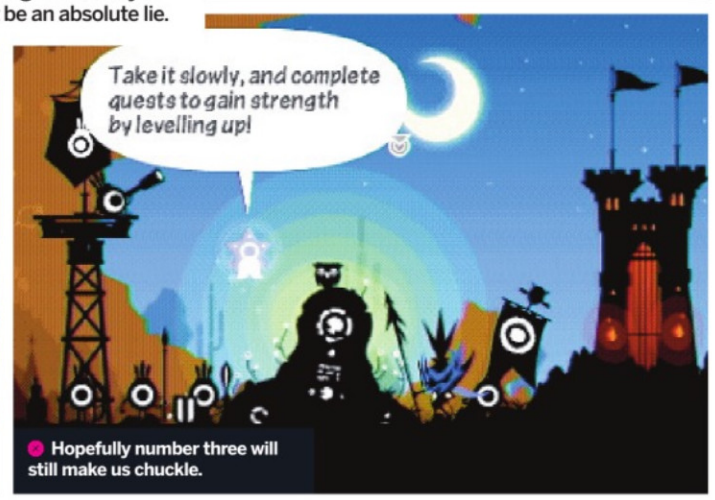
The designs of the Patapon tribes are based on ancient cave paintings discovered outside of Bognor Regis. This may or may not be an absolute lie.

You are no longer a god. Get over yourself.



It's certainly a lot busier on screen.

As always, earn more spoils to help your tribe.



Hopefully number three will still make us chuckle.

MULTI-DRUM

Pata pata pata pon (x4)

MULTIPLAYER, CHUCKED IN with *Patapon 2*, is seeing the most attention upgrade-wise. Up to eight players can drum-fight via Wi-Fi – four on each team. Also, things are being opened up sufficiently to allow multiplayer to take place on any level, rather than the select few we were limited to last time around. Fair enough.

THE LATEST ON... They might deserve more space, but we don't have more space for them

EARTH DEFENSE FORCE: INSECT ARMAGEDDON

Publisher: D3Publisher **Developer:** Vicious Cycle Software
ETA: TBC **Format:** PS3

WE LOVE A bit of *EDF* action at **Play** – ridiculousness on an epic scale, and so utterly crap (but in a great way). So we're a bit wary of the new *EDF*, as what we've seen doesn't strike us as being wilfully dumb. Still, blowing up giant ants is great.

SNIPER: GHOST WARRIOR

Publisher: City Interactive **Developer:** City Interactive
ETA: Q1 2011 **Format:** PS3

CITY INTERACTIVE HAS decided to make its PS3 release of *Sniper: Ghost Warrior* even more about... sniping. The new levels you'll be playing on this version that weren't on the Xbox 360 are all very sniper driven and the rubbish assault levels are now from a sniper's perspective. Wesley Snipes does not appear.

SWARM

Publisher: UTV Ignition Entertainment **Developer:** HotHead Games **ETA:** Q1 2011 **Format:** PSN

WITH THE DEVELOPER of *DeathSpank* at the helm you know you're in for at least a bit of a treat with *Swarm*. Players control 50 Swarmites in "intense, entertaining, and often suicidal battles for a greater good". Which sounds nice. It looks like another interesting, amusing addition to the PSN.

DYNASTY WARRIORS 7

Publisher: Koei **Developer:** Omega Force
ETA: March **Format:** PS3

ANOTHER CHANCE TO waddle around twocking thousands of enemy troops in the latest entry to the series you either ignore or utterly adore. Expect a new kingdom – Jin – and enough changes to fill a bulletpoint list. Other than that, it's business as usual: hammer some buttons until you win.

HYPERDIMENSION NEPTUNIA

Publisher: Koei **Developer:** Compile Heart
ETA: March **Format:** PS3

HYPERDIMENSION NEPTUNIA TAKES place in the world of Game Industry, and sees players using Sega characters and PS3 photo album pictures as guardian angels. Oh, and it's supposedly about the console war between PS3, 360 and Wii. Strangely, we didn't make any of this up just to fill space.

VALKYRIA CHRONICLES III

Publisher: Sega **Developer:** Sega
ETA: TBC **Format:** PSP

THIS IS LIKELY to be out in Japan already, unless you're reading this issue on the day it came out (thanks for your support). *Valkyria Chronicles II* on PSP was a great step for the series, and number three looks set to be more of the same. That's not a bad thing, though.

WHITE KNIGHT CHRONICLES: DOGMA WARS

Publisher: TBC **Developer:** Level-5
ETA: TBC **Format:** PSP

HERE'S ANOTHER ONE that may be out by the time you read this. Expect four-player infrastructure co-op and the ability to import your characters from the console version of *WKC 2*. Looks like the right way to go for the series.

SBK 2011

Publisher: Black Bean Games **Developer:** Milestone Studios
ETA: May **Format:** PS3

WE, ALONG WITH the rest of the world, have been told that *SBK 2011* will improve things, The look of the game, the backgrounds, little graphical effects, the physics – the whole package. It's been a while since we had a truly brilliant racing game of the motorbike variety, so here's hoping.

PERSONA 2: INNOCENT SIN

Publisher: Atlus **Developer:** Atlus
ETA: TBC **Format:** PSP

WE HAVE NO idea whether *Persona 2* is even coming to Europe, never mind when, but seeing as the last *Persona* made its way to these shores via PSN then we are hopeful. Another classic RPG entry to relive or play for the first time, and a great game to get caught up in like all those obsessive fans already have.

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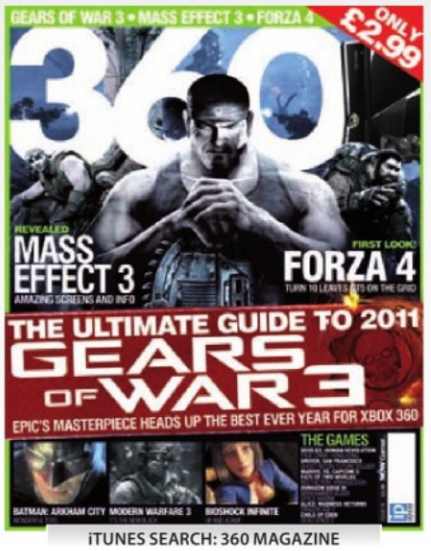

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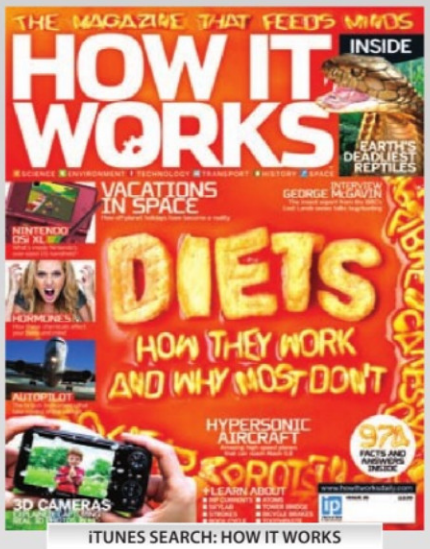

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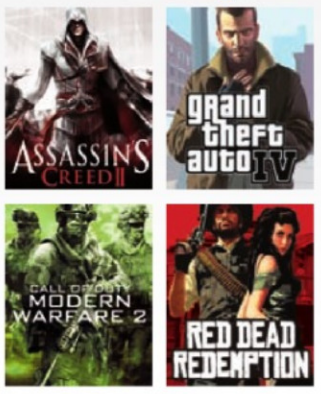

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REVIEWS

Playing bad games so you don't have to

Jon Gordon

Reviewed: *LittleBigPlanet2*

Jon has spent the last month perfecting chicken curry (not a euphemism), beating off shopping queues (not a euphemism) and attempting to plot as many ways as possible to get through *Mass Effect* (not a euphemism). Nor did Jon promise to shape his future plans around activities we could craft into euphemisms. Why does he have to be so difficult?

currently playing: *LittleBigPlanet 2*

on review

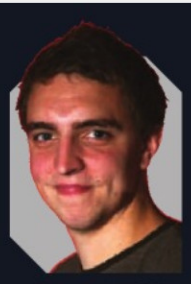
90 Dead Space 2 PS3
The scary just got scarier

92 Mass Effect 2 PS3
Simply brilliant

94 Dance Dance Revolution PS3
Get into the groove

95 nail'd PS3
A poor man's Pure?

www.imagineshop.co.uk



Chris McMahon
Reviewed: *nail'd*

Chris went to New York! Then he went to Illinois, which obviously isn't as good. Then he met a man who had the perfect life. That must have been awkward. Then Chris found himself relegated to the role of bit-part actor in said man's perfect life. Then Chris... look, we have to stop. This paragraph started on a high note but now it's just getting depressing.

currently playing: *Silent Hill: Shattered Memories*

Ian Dransfield
Reviewed: *Dead Space 2, Mass Effect 2*

This month, Ian has been doing nothing.

currently playing: *Vanquish*

Dave Cook
Reviewed: *Dance Dance Revolution*

What have you been up to Dave? "You mean gaming wise?" No, life wise. "I've been playing *Black Ops* and..." It's horrible when you don't know if someone heard you or not. You want to say something but what if he did hear you? Then you've insulted him. Or what if he did ignore what you said? Then he's insulting you. God. Life is so hard.

currently playing: *Call Of Duty: Black Ops*

RELEASE DATE: 21 JANUARY

LittleBigPlanet 2

We are the children of the revolution

DETAILS

Publisher
Sony
Developer
Media Molecule
Price
£49.99
Players
1-4
Genre
Platform
Supports
720p, PlayStation Network, Downloadable content, Sixaxis, DualShock 3, Move, Dolby Digital 5.1
Age Rating
7
Website
www.littlebigplanet.com

PS3

When we finally got the chance to review *LittleBigPlanet* back in issue 172 we were reviewing its potential as much as what it delivered on the disc. That could have proved a risky move. *LBP* was only ever going to be as good as its community made it. The main game showed promise and the tools it made available to us were impressive, but would it connect with gamers?

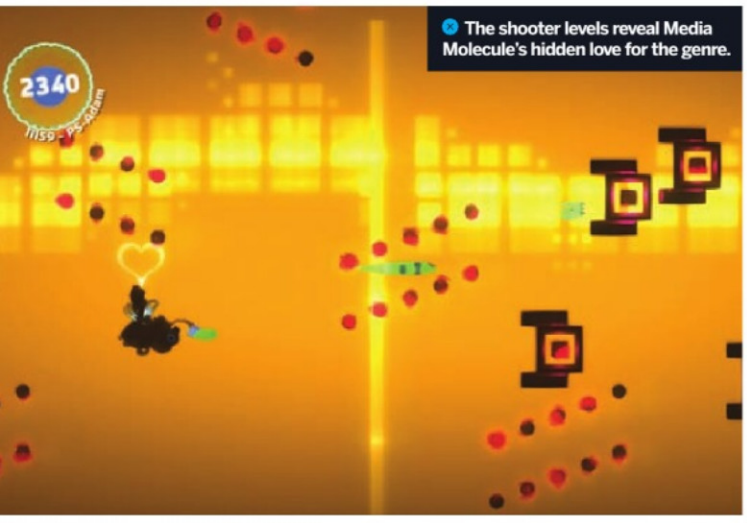
It would be easy to assume that no such concerns exist with *LittleBigPlanet 2* and that is partially true. The issue is no longer whether or not the community can make use of the tools at their disposal, but more on Media Molecule itself and whether it can deliver a game that is genuinely a step-up from where it was two years ago. We were pleased to find it can.

Boil *LBP 2* down to its basics and it gives you pretty much the same set of options as before. You have the Story mode, which acts as the single-player and co-op campaign. There's the community section where you'll find all the user-created levels and then you have your Moon for designing levels of your own and sharing them with others. That's' what is on the surface, but what *LBP 2* has done is go deeper into virtually every aspect of these core pillars.

> There's almost recklessness about it. A sense of freewheeling, carefree fun

As we've covered in some depth through our previews, interviews and features, *LBP 2* is a lot more game than its forebear even dreamed of being. Platforming is only one aspect of what it can achieve and that's reflected in the Story mode. When you play through from beginning to end you can feel the influence of the *LBP* community on it. It's clear that Media Molecule has been inspired by the ingenuity of its players and has tried to take what they did with the first game and give them the tools to do it better, more accurately and with more personality. From crazy platform jumping to shooting and racing, *LBP 2* ticks lots of boxes and offers a different experience on virtually every new level of the Story game.

Players of the original game may need to pinch their noses and take the plunge in the early stages, as there's a lot of tutorial handed out. Media Molecule has clearly – and sensibly – assumed that *LBP 2* is going to be drawing in a lot of new players. Rules are re-explained, mechanics tested and taught, but once you break through these you'll start to see all the crazy new things available to you. Most important there's a challenge here that goes beyond having to adjust to Sackboy's floaty jumping and physics. Some are still going to find these a hindrance, but with so many new gameplay mechanics, the need to accurately jump from platform to platform is no longer a massively used challenge. Swinging, shooting, throwing, pulling and leading are all more important. >



The shooter levels reveal Media Molecule's hidden love for the genre.

LBP 2's boss battles are some of the highlights of the game.

> Playing through the Story mode it becomes clear that it was not only the game that evolved and matured between *LBP* and this sequel. Media Molecule has grown in confidence, too. There's almost recklessness about it. A sense of freewheeling, carefree fun. There were times when we thought, 'that's not going to work', but it was all pitch perfect. One of the major complaints about the original was that its Story mode was nothing to write home about. It's lucky *LBP 2* was delayed until after Christmas as the postal network will have a lot of new traffic to handle now.

A couple of key examples spring to mind. Flying In The Face Of Danger is a shooter level that sees Sackboy riding on the back of a bee. It starts out as a side-scrolling shooter in the mould of classics such as *R-Type*, but then the camera twists around and suddenly we're playing a top-down shooter. There's no break in gameplay, no loss of control. This is a seamless switch from one to another. It only brought home even more clearly just how far the game had come.

The other level that is deserving of a mention is Where In The World Is Avalon Centrifuge. You lead a small troop of Sackbots with plasma-firing Creatinators on their heads against the dark forces of the Negativatron. You don't take on the enemies directly yourself. Your job is to manipulate the level so that the Sackbots can travel around it and expose weak-spots on enemies so they can be taken out. It's a showcase of superb level design, AI programming and challenge and it's also great fun to play.

We won't go too much further into what the Story mode shows off or does, as we don't want to spoil it and that brings up another great achievement of this game over the last. For all that the Story mode may only be a means of introducing you to the 'proper' game of creating and sharing levels, it does actually feel like a whole, finished product. It has an engaging and fun story with entertaining characters and wonderful ways of justifying its weird twists and turns. For all the different gameplay styles and genres included in the Story mode it always feels like *LittleBigPlanet*. *LBP 2* retains the charm and humour of the original with the addition of fully voiced and animated characters.

> Five minutes spent looking in your Tool Bag is likely to spawn about 50 different level or game ideas

As ever there's just enough of a glimpse behind the curtain with each level you play to get some idea as to how it was put together, but there's a much greater sense of magic to *LittleBigPlanet 2* than we experienced with the original. This can really only be put down to two things; Media Molecule's growing expertise and the Sackbots. These little guys offer a similar appeal to Sackboy himself the first time around. Their innocent and simple behaviour, bouncy animation and interaction with the world make them a joy to watch. But their impact is not just in the foreground, directly involved in your game and the challenges you face. They offer just as much, if not more, in the background of levels, bringing them to life.

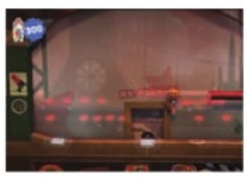
There are six worlds all told and six characters to meet on your adventure as you attempt to save Craftworld from the evil Negativatron. Each world features five main levels as well as numerous bonus missions to find the keys for, which range from single-player races and score attack games to competitive multiplayer challenges. Thirty main levels isn't necessarily a huge number and will last around five hours or so, but that's more than the first game had and you shouldn't forget that the 2.5 million levels already made for the first game are playable with this sequel. That sound like enough to get started with?

And yet still the true proof of this game is going to be the levels it inspires rather than the levels it offers on the disc. The tools are as simple and effective as before, but this time offer opportunities almost too numerous to get our heads around. Five minutes spent looking in your Tool Bag is likely to spawn about 50 different level or game ideas. One of the great benefits of having the first game, though, which has been strengthened by the beta tests for *LBP 2* is that we already know that the community is there and is capable of doing amazing things. We've played some of the levels that are being imagined already and they are astounding. The genius of *LBP* players seems to have no limit. If you can think of it, chances are *LBP 2* will let you create it.

There's probably still an air of intimidation around *LittleBigPlanet 2* for those who don't think themselves creatively inclined, but everything is presented in such a simple and easy manner there really is no reason to stay away. Apart from anything else Media Molecule

BONUS ROUND Our favourite bonus levels

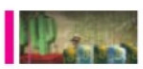
SPLIT PATHS (FACTORY OF A BETTER TOMORROW)
With the Sackbots programmed to follow the heart, this level involves activating switches to help Sackboy and his stalkers get to the end of the level in one piece.


BASKETBALL (FACTORY OF A BETTER TOMORROW)
This is a simple and yet addictive multiplayer game that makes use of the competitive scoring system and bounce pads to amazing effect. Who needs *NBA Jam*?

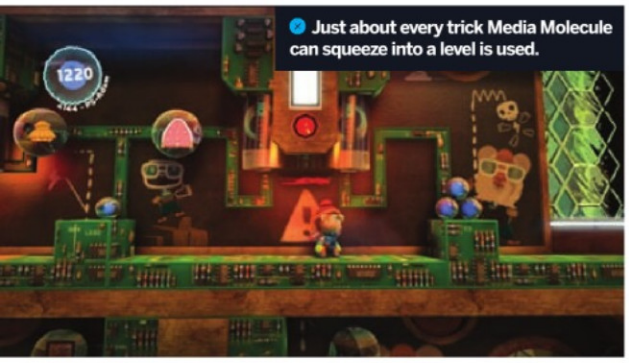
RODENT DERBY (VICTORIA'S LABORATORY)
An excellent multiplayer racer, what we particularly like about Rodent Derby is that it has a track selection option before you get to competing. How amazing is that?

MIND CONTROL (EVE'S ASYLUM)
A superb piece of Controlinator use as you control two Sackbots (dressed as your Sackboy to really mess with your head) simultaneously on asymmetric stages. It's some great puzzling.

SPACE POOL (THE COSMOS)
It's pool, but in space. Or at least in The Cosmos stage of *LBP 2*. This game is exactly what it says on the tin, a no-nonsense pool game for up to four players and we have to say it's damn good.

In this series

LittleBigPlanet Issue 172
Media Molecule delivered a beautiful, complex and, dare we say it, important game. **94%**

Don't read anything into this screen. *LBP 2* is far from going down the toilet.


Just about every trick Media Molecule can squeeze into a level is used.

This level is actually on a moving train and is pretty amazing to play.

is embracing everyone with this game. You gain as much credit in the community now for playing and reviewing other people's levels as you do for making them yourself.

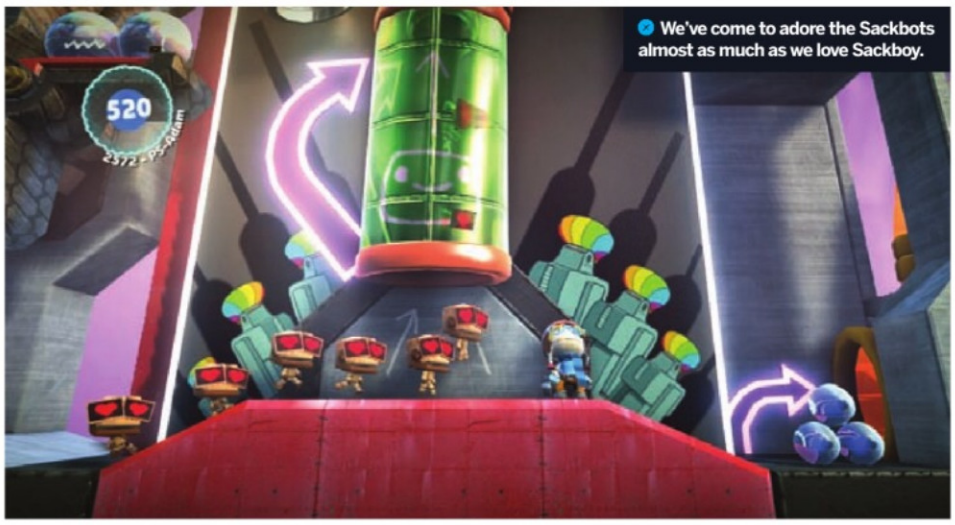
If you don't fancy yourself as a level creator why not compose some music instead? The sequencer is amazingly cool with great potential for making your own custom soundtracks. It can also be used to make cut-scenes and movie making is likely to be a big part of the community this time around. If you want to get really geeky, though, you need to spend some time working on the Microchips and designing AI. That, we think, will be one of the most interesting new avenues of creation *LBP 2* has opened up.

Jon Gordon

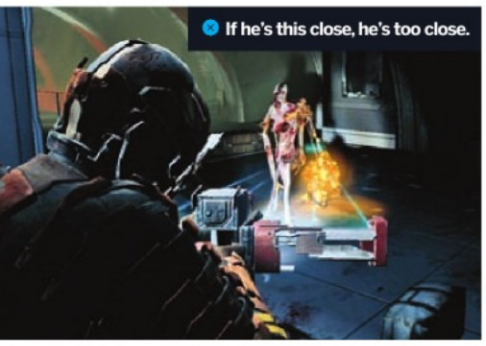
VERDICT

***LBP 2* is an amazing game that will ultimately only be limited by the imaginations of the people who play it. You'll want to be involved in this game, even if it's only to see where the community takes it.**

96%


We've come to adore the Sackbots almost as much as we love Sackboy.

Shoot it in the... errm... thing.


If he's this close, he's too close.

Isaac's sanity is constantly in question.

RELEASE DATE: 28 JANUARY

Dead Space 2

MORE LIKE DEAD ACE WOO

PS3 The game that came to mind, about halfway through *Dead Space 2*, was quite surprising. We'd hit about chapter seven of Visceral's follow-up to 2008's well-received original and it just struck us: this reminds us of *Resident Evil 2*. It doesn't play the same, the atmosphere is markedly different and the design ethic behind it isn't derived in any way from Capcom's PSone classic. But the overwhelming feeling we got from *Dead Space 2* – outside of the panic attacks – was that it shared something with *Resident Evil 2*.

Eventually it dawned on us just why this had popped into our head: *Resi 2* was a sequel that took everything good about the first game and ramped it up to make it a great game. That's *exactly* what *Dead Space 2* has done, and short of a total reinvention, there's little Visceral could have done to make this a better sequel. Stop reading now, go buy the game then come back and finish reading this if you can be bothered – you will not be disappointed.

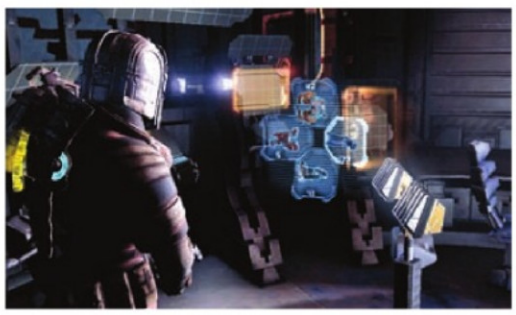
> There's little Visceral could have done to make this a better sequel

Right, those of you who are still paying attention will probably want to know things like 'what it's all about' and 'what it plays like', like the inquisitive bunch of ne'er do wells you are. *Dead Space 2* continues the story of one Isaac Clarke – once-mute frontman of the original game, now given a (bland) face and (generic) voice. Isaac, after the events of the first game, has found himself in a spot of bother mentally and wound up in a mental institution, plagued by visions of his deceased girlfriend and other rather ghostly (and spooky) apparitions. Needless to say, the game doesn't stay here throughout and players aren't forced to live the day-to-day life of a man in a mental ward. No, something *far* more exciting happens: all hell breaks loose. Somehow, some way, the Necromorphs of the original game return to get all slicey on everyone human-looking and – once again – it's up to our man Isaac to save the day. He's dealt with this lot before, after all.

From the opening, straight-jacket-encased scenes, *Dead Space 2* sets out its stall to show you what you'll be dealing with for the next eight to ten hours. Things will jump out at you, you'll feel overwhelmed and *will* be made to jump a lot. It's not deep horror, it's not psychological trauma (as much as

DETAILS

Publisher
EA
Developer
Visceral Games
Price
£49.99
Players
1-8
Genre
Third-person shooter/survival horror
Supports
1080p, 720p, PlayStation Network, Downloadable content, DualShock 3, Dolby Digital 5.1
Age Rating
18
Website
www.deadspace.ea.com



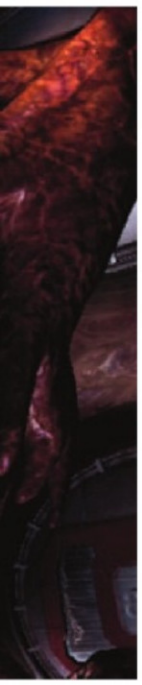
TWO TICKETS TO THE GUN SHOW

Make it a dismember to remember

SPEAKING WITH OTHERS in the office who had been playing *Dead Space 2*, it quickly became apparent we had all taken different approaches to the game with regards to weapon loadouts. The new weapons complement the returning firearms nicely, and it highlights the balance Visceral has achieved with Isaac's assault options. We opted for an overpowered laser, sniper rifle, plasma cutter and pulse rifle – others brought in the javelin gun, some the mine launcher and then some just relied on old faithful (aka the line gun). But the key point is nobody felt over or underpowered – it's just brilliantly balanced.

Or you could try

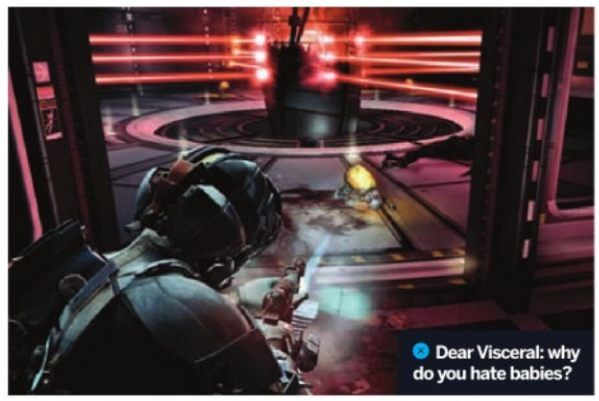
Resident Evil 5: Gold Edition Issue 190
More action-horror, this, but with an 'on Earth' slant to things. **86%**

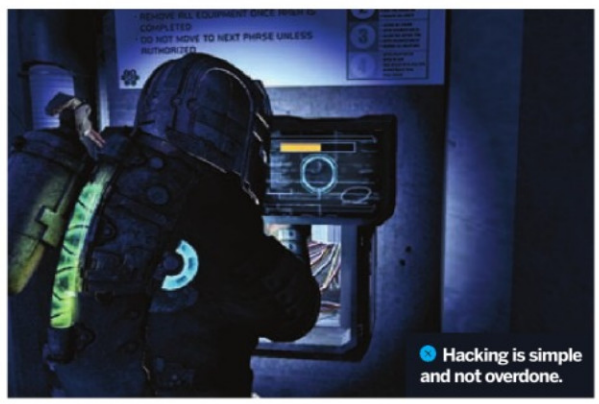


A spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down!

Ah, well that's just nasty.

Zero-G sections are generally great.


Dear Visceral: why do you hate babies?



Hacking is simple and not overdone.

it deals with Isaac's psyche) and it's not what we'd call intelligent in the way it scares you – but it works. You *know* something is going to jump out on you, but it gets you every time. Every time you will jump. Every time you will panic. Every time you will miss a shot or two, allowing the Necromorphs to get a bit closer than you're comfortable with. And every time it's all over, you won't trust the quiet. *Dead Space 2* keeps players constantly on edge – we were afraid at one point it might have turned into an action game, but we were wrong. There are more than enough quiet sections to lull you into a false sense of security, and this is something Visceral seems to have a knack for – you should feel safe, as there's nothing coming to kill you, but you don't feel safe because you *do not* trust the game. It's not subtle, but it is a masterful technique in its own right.

New elements brought to *Dead Space 2* tend to improve on the original's features, like Zero-G section. Before they involved simply jumping from one platform to another, but now they're fully controllable three-dimensional sections that call for skill alongside spatial awareness. The obligatory extra weapons (see 'Two Tickets To The Gun Show' boxout) and new enemies are perfect fits and each adds something unique to the experience. Though we're still wondering just what it is Visceral has against babies.

And all of this is without even talking about the fundamentals we all love so very much. *Dead Space 2* controls better than the first game – smoother and quicker, and QTEs aren't overused. Graphically and sound-wise it's fantastic – far less brown than before with some beautiful vistas over The Sprawl and Saturn itself. Lighting is stunning at times and it's easy to find yourself just looking around, taking in the lives that used to occupy the area, detailed as things are. Sound backs up the graphical quality with some brilliantly atmospheric effects, and some of the Necromorph cries are genuinely unsettling. It's also an eminently replayable game, with New Game+ rewarding players and the three-save-only Hardcore mode appearing genuinely terrifying, at least in regards to difficulty. There – that's the basics for all those that love them.

Dead Space 2 is brilliant – no two ways about it. It's everything a sequel should be and it's a fine, poo-your-pants inclusion to anybody's library.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

Take the good stuff from *Dead Space*. Make it better. Add in some new elements. Make it *even better*. *Dead Space 2* doesn't reinvent the formula, but it's refined to the point where we're happy to say 'this is a great game'.

92%

In this series

Dead Space Issue 172
A good game, but made to feel *old* by *Dead Space 2*. **87%**

Combat is cover based, and works well.

RELEASE DATE: 21 JANUARY

Mass Effect 2

A game like this deserves an epic standfirst. Like this one

DETAILS

Publisher
Electronic Arts
Developer
BioWare
Price
£49.99
Players
1
Genre
RPG
Supports
720p, Downloadable content, DualShock 3, Dolby Digital 5.1
Age Rating
15
Website
www.masseffect.bioware.com

PS3 Some see it as a huge coup for PS3, some see it as an inevitability what with the series selling millions around the world, while some see it as a betrayal of the format that initially made it successful. Us? We don't much care for the background – we're too busy exploring the galaxy with our female Shepard (who looks like "He-Man on a hen night", apparently), soaking in one of the best games not just of this generation, but of any. *Mass Effect 2* has arrived on Sony's console, and that's all anybody needs to know.

A short background for those of you who have missed this former PC and 360-only series: you are Commander Shepard; you have to stop an unknown threat; your mission is to assemble a team and then go kick some backside; you get to mine planets. During all of this, players take part in one of the best Western RPGs out there, full of well-acted, flowing dialogue, interesting moral decisions, a bit of alien sex, lots of shooting bad guys and even a signing Salarian. Describing it in such terms does *Mass Effect 2* no justice at all: it's one of the most atmospheric and engaging games we've ever played, and it's a joy from start to finish. Unless you don't like mining, in which case you might get a tiny bit annoyed.

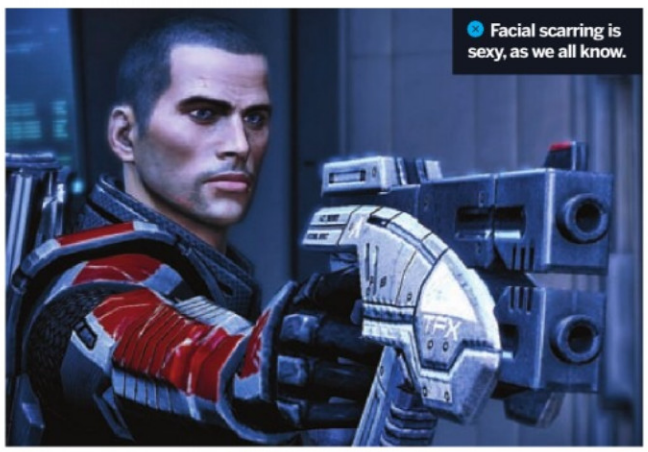
Boiling *Mass Effect 2* down to its constituent parts is an exercise in pointlessness – it's a game about experiences. While it can't be said everyone plays it differently, like your *Fallout* and *Elder Scrolls* games, there is choice, there is intrigue, and there is a deep, involving back story that will utterly engulf you if you let it. We sat and read the codex entries for – literally – hours. BioWare has created a fantastically rich fiction to back up the universe and it shows – when you find out why the Elcor qualify everything they say by stating how they are saying it, it will raise a smile. When you discover humanity is seen as something of a pest by other races, you will want to know why. When you wonder what the hell is up with Asaris, you can find out. It's brilliant. Brilliant, brilliant and brilliant. Really, it's brilliant.

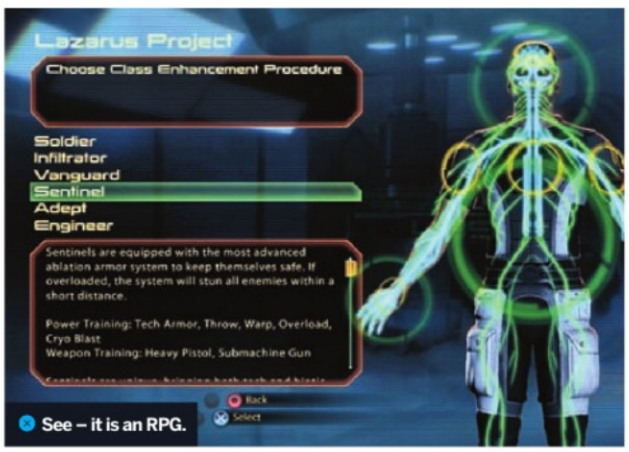
> "It's brilliant. Brilliant, brilliant and brilliant. Really, it's brilliant"

The much-speculated-on 'interactive comic' that frames the narrative of the original *Mass Effect* does exactly what we expected it to. The story from the first game is pared down to a five or ten-minute narration with player choices at key story moments. It's unspectacular and led to many others in the office saying BioWare 'could have done more', but that would be to miss the point. It does exactly what it sets out to do, it lets players make choices that affect *Mass Effect 2* (though admittedly the subtlety of some choices is lost, like that of the Rachni) and it's over with quickly enough to not be intrusive. It's not ideal, but it's good at what it needs to be good at.

Other than this addition, the changes to the PS3 version don't exactly leap out at the player. The DLC is included, meaning you'll start the game with a crapton of visors, assault rifles and limited-edition armour, as well as the extra missions. We were told the game has seen some touching up in the graphical stakes, but in all honesty it didn't look too different to our collective eye. Granted, we didn't have the opportunity to see both PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 versions running side by side, but it still looks great, so who cares? Essentially it feels like the '*Mass Effect 2 Complete Collection*', or whatever publishers would call that these days – Game Of The Year Edition, we suppose. It's exactly what we expected, and nothing more.

But then, *more* than *Mass Effect 2* would be some kind of super-game from the space-future. While it may seem, at first glance, to be a bit disappointing – a short comic scene in place of an entire first game and some DLC that's been out elsewhere for months,

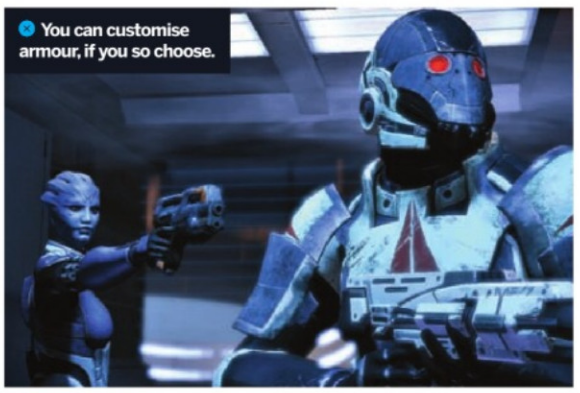

Facial scarring is sexy, as we all know.



See – it is an RPG.

Or you could try

Dragon Age: Origins Issue 186
The main alternative – it's BioWare, but fantasy. **82%**


You can customise armour, if you so choose.

You can't talk your way out of every situation.

PRICE MATTERS

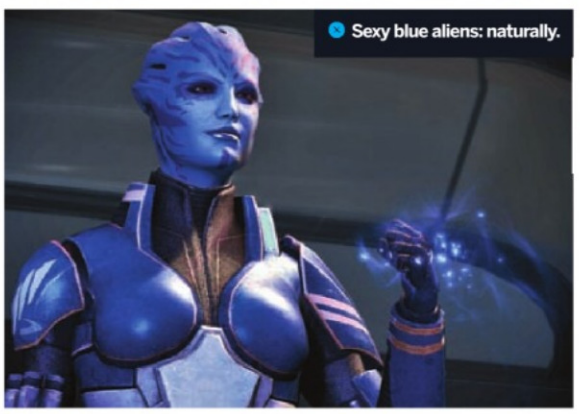
A year old and full price? Hmm

IT'S TRUE YOU could level legitimate criticism at the fact *Mass Effect 2* is being released at full price, when the 360 and PC versions are available for about £15 these days. If you're an owner of those other devices and haven't played it already, it could be argued these are the better options. Two things, though: one, the additional cost of DLC will push the price up to similar levels of the PS3 version, and two, we're a PlayStation magazine, for PlayStation owners. As far as we're concerned, this is an essential purchase for every PS3 owner. So there.

along with a graphical update we couldn't make out probably doesn't fill your heart with yearning, most likely. But we're just trying to find balance – to approach this with a critical eye. *Mass Effect 2* is undoubtedly one of the best games out there, regardless of what it's released on, what genre it is or how many extra helmets it comes with. It's not perfect (what is?) but it fulfils everything we ever wanted it to, and for it to finally arrive on PS3 – something we predicted back in **Play** 187 – is one of the best things to happen to the console. If you've never played it, buy it right now. Even if you have played it, it's worth playing through again.

Ian Dransfield

The galaxy map music will stick with you for years.


Sexy blue aliens: naturally.

This isn't perspective – they're actually stood next to each other.

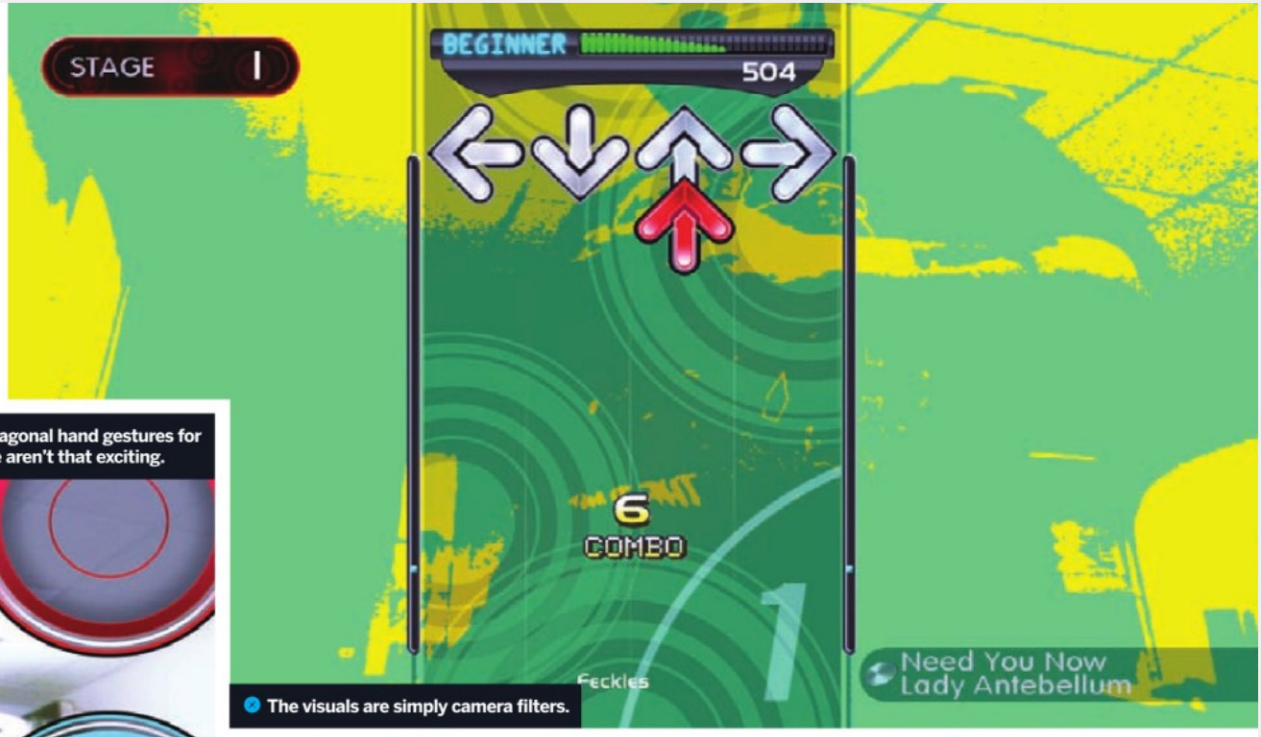
VERDICT

One of the best games available, now available on PlayStation 3. Engaging, deep, stunningly atmospheric, funny, witty, shiny and – get this – *fun*. We struggle to think of more that can be said, other than: go and buy it now pleasethanksbye.

97%

In this series

Mass Effect Issue N/A
The non-PS3 game is great, but *Mass Effect 2* is the better game. **Hmm... 91%?**



The visuals are simply camera filters.

Diagonal hand gestures for Move aren't that exciting.

Mess up combo arrows and the screen cracks.

RELEASE DATE: TBC

Dance Dance Revolution

Not quite the revolution we were expecting

PS3 Given that PlayStation Move does a superb job of tracking hand movements in real-time, as well as offering a complexity that the Wii can't match, you would hope that any *Dance Dance Revolution* title using the tech would boast a king's ransom in neat new features. However, the result is an antiquated formula that has changed little since it first began in arcades back in 1998. The core dance mat mechanic is identical, with four directional buttons cascading down an on-screen track, but it feels outdated and stale today. There was a time when the *DDR* series was innovative and inviting, but it simply hasn't kept up with new tech on offer.

The track list is a paltry selection of 20 tracks by real artists such as Lady Gaga's *Bad Romance*, Duran Duran's *Rio* and *Animal* by Ke$ha. The songs aren't bad, but with only 20 on the disc, bolstered by another ten J-pop in-house tracks that make us want to lop our own ears off, you have to wonder what value you're getting with this. Sure there's a DLC store, but it's a bit of a slap in the face to be expected to make do with the handful of starting songs unless you're willing to pay the price for more.

Songs can be played in Party mode for up to four players, in Club mode that plays a random set list with no breaks between tracks, or in the all-new Move And Step mode. The latter is where Move comes into play, and all the mode does is plonk four circular targets on screen for diagonal moves, in addition to the four dance mat directions. We get that the hand movements go one step towards making you dance with your full body, but it just feels so robotic and unnatural. It's not dancing at all, it's just odd and while it's perfectly functional, it does actually make you wish Harmonix would release the superb *Dance Central* on PS3.

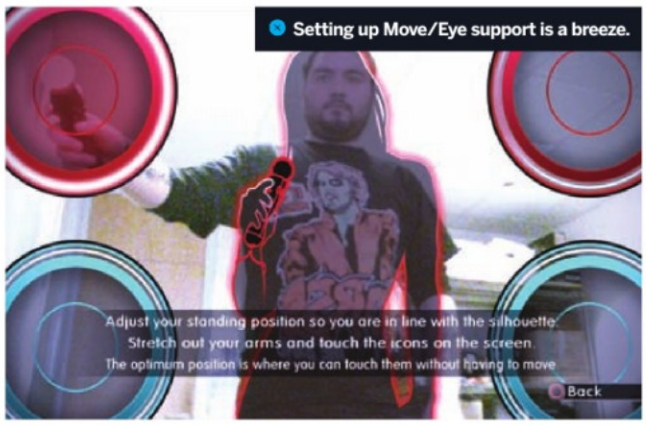
> It makes you wish Harmonix would release the superb Dance Central on PS3

There are some neat inclusions, such as a calorie counter and the option to upload videos to YouTube. *SingStar* and fitness games first did these ages ago, but they are still welcome. Other than this there is no real value to be found here unless you're a *DDR* nut, otherwise this is just another piece of evidence that some Japanese studios are falling behind the times.

Dave Cook

DETAILS

Publisher
Konami
Developer
Konami
Price
£39.99
Players
1-4
Genre
Rhythm Action
Supports
Move, Navigation Controller, Downloadable content, DualShock 3, Dolby Digital 5.1
Age Rating
3
Website
www.konami.com/ddr/



Setting up Move/Eye support is a breeze.

Nice tunes, shame there aren't more of them.

VERDICT

For a fully motion control-enabled dancing experience look elsewhere. This mishmash of dance mat and limp Move functionality really does make for murder on the dancefloor.

52%

Or you could try

SingStar Issue 159
Not dancing, but definitely a better party game experience. **80%**

RELEASE DATE: 4 FEBRUARY

nail'd Just about nails it

The score attack mode sees you gain boost for points.

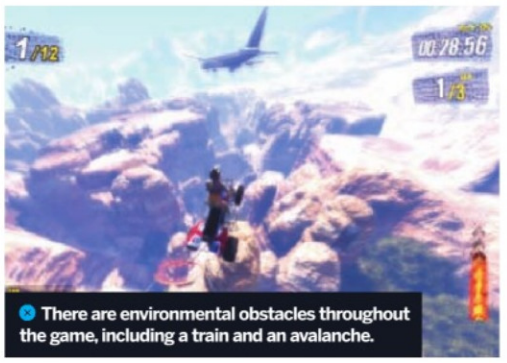
DETAILS

Publisher
Deep Silver
Developer
Techland
Price
£39.99
Players
1-12
Genre
Racing
Supports
1080i, 720p, PlayStation Network, Downloadable content, Sixaxis, DualShock 3, Dolby Digital 5.1
Age Rating
12
Website
www.naildgame.com

PS3 If there's one game that deserves the benefit of your doubt this Q1, it's *nail'd*. Developed by Techland of *Call Of Juarez* fame, this motorbike and ATV off-road racer has been quickly, and unfairly, rejected by many gamers as a poor man's *Pure*. But take the time to learn the game and understand its design choices and you'll discover an experience that's unfussy, frenetic and fun.

nail'd plays like it's on fast-forward, the player hurtling through twisting, multi-levelled and labyrinthine tracks that crest and dip as if designed by a rollercoaster engineer. You'll often find yourself plummeting hundreds of feet; dodging air balloons and wind farms; making hairpin turns while driving up the side of mountains; or jumping across platforms suspended from the underside of helicopters. It all occurs at a blistering pace, the game's frame rate just about keeping up, although it will slow to a juddery pace now and then.

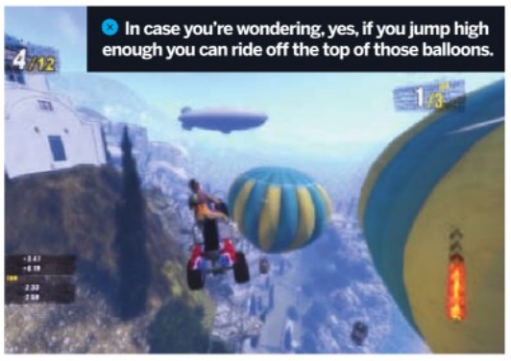
> nail'd plays like it's on fast-forward, the player hurtling through twisting, labyrinthine tracks



There are environmental obstacles throughout the game, including a train and an avalanche.

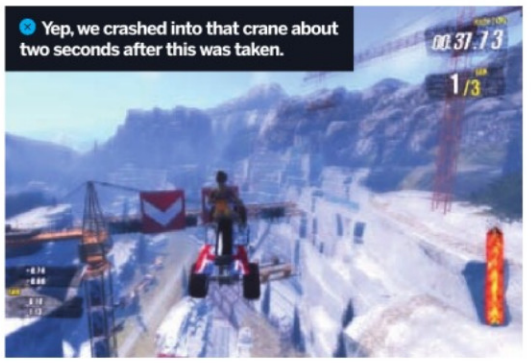
The problem is that *nail'd* only starts to show off its better tracks after several hours of play, at which point many gamers will already have become bored and switched off. A big sticking point for many will be the game's constant crashes and inconsistent physics. *nail'd* moves so fast and its tracks are so complex that you'll often find yourself driving into walls where you're supposed to turn or crashing into part of the course you're not actually supposed to race on. The spawn system is fast enough to get you back on track, but it's fickle. Sometimes you'll be placed unfairly ahead of the pack, other times you're left far behind.

A second negative comes in the game's lack of stunts. Most off-road racers allow players to flip and contort their character around the vehicle, something *Pure* turned into an ingenious risk-reward mechanic. *nail'd* doesn't bother at all. Here your boost meter is fed by making perfect landings or driving through fire gates, meaning your time in the air (and there's a lot of it) is simply spent repositioning your vehicle to ensure you get a better touchdown.



In case you're wondering, yes, if you jump high enough you can ride off the top of those balloons.

A bikini top and spandex trousers appears to be Techland's idea of a safe motocross outfit.



Yep, we crashed into that crane about two seconds after this was taken.

But *nail'd* prevails over these issues by virtue of being *fun*. Once you realise the name of the game is keeping that boost gauge full you will discover a racer that's about adrenaline and exhilaration if not anything deeper. Sure, *nail'd* lacks the inventiveness of *Pure* or the raw intensity of *MotorStorm*, but the game's dismissal of the laws of physics and its mindless approach to off-road racing makes for an engaging and enjoyable experience nevertheless.

Chris McMahon

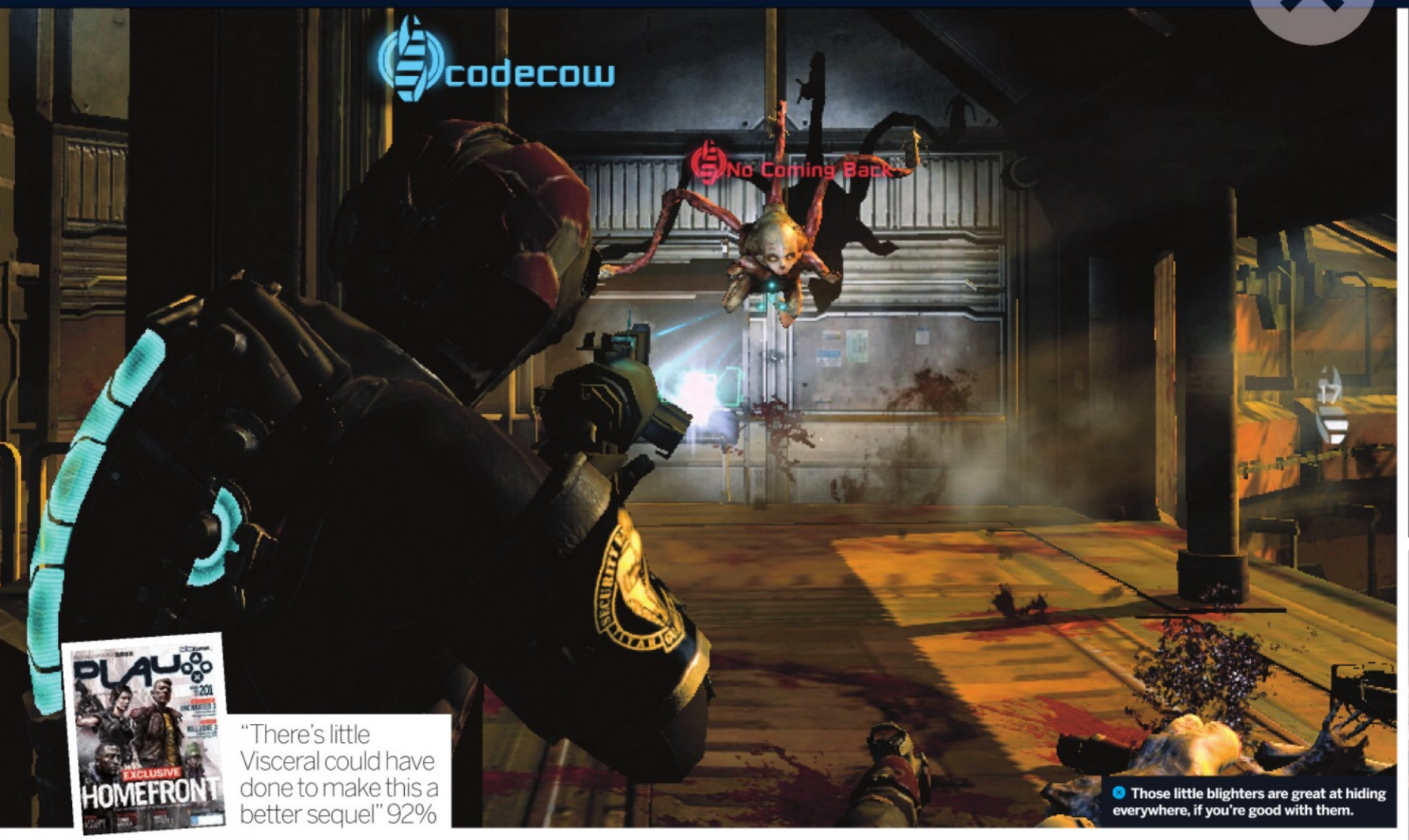
VERDICT

It's often repetitive, its customisation mechanic feels tacked on, and it takes a good few hours to come out of its shell, but *nail'd* eventually emerges as a fun racer. Just don't expect it to be topping any top ten racer lists.

61%

Or you could try

Pure Issue 171
Black Rock Studios proved that off-road racing could be both clever and exciting. **80%**



Those little blighters are great at hiding everywhere, if you're good with them.

"There's little Visceral could have done to make this a better sequel" 92%

Dead Space 2

Hide in a dark corner and vomit on your friends. AND IN THE GAME!

DETAILS

Publisher
EA
Developer
Visceral Games
Release Date
28 January
Price
£49.99
Players
1-8
Genre
Third-person shooter/survival horror
Supports
1080p, 1080i, 720p, Downloadable content, DualShock 3, Dolby Digital 5.1

Take a look back at our review on page 90 to see what we thought of *Dead Space 2*'s single-player. For those who can't physically exert themselves to the point of turning a few pages: it's good. Really good. While in the main game we were worried it would turn into an all-action shooter – and we're very glad that it didn't – the mere fact that a multiplayer mode had been tagged onto *Dead Space 2* filled us with dread. Being proven wrong twice in one month (with the same game, no less) has never felt this good.

The basic setup is simple enough – there are two teams, one made up of up to four human security team soldiers, one made up of up to four human-controlled Necromorphs (and a few more AI-controlled horrors to bolster the ranks). Each member of the human team is able to choose their loadout, with weaponry and armour unlocking as they progress through the levels – while it's annoying to not have the Line Gun from the outset, it feels all the better for when you do eventually unlock it.

But it's the alien side where things begin get a bit more interesting, with players able to choose from four different classes covering four different styles of play: the quick, disposable cannon fodder; the hiding-on-a-dark-ceiling sniper; the ranged ex-person who tends to vomit at people; and the tank. It's a simple setup, and reminds us of *Left 4 Dead* in a few ways. We did encounter some problems with balancing, though – not in that any particular characters were over or under-powered, but because we genuinely saw little use in two of the four characters. The tank, for example, has a super-powerful ranged attack of its own, meaning its vomiting counterpart is rendered somewhat irrelevant. It's strange there isn't more variation between the classes when there are only four on offer – but this is something that can always be addressed in future patches, and it doesn't have a hugely negative effect on proceedings.

Dead Space 2 is just good fun online. It's scary, but in a different way to the single-player game. It encourages teamwork from the human players to the point that it almost *forces* it – which is no bad thing. It's not particularly deep and it won't take long to see everything there is to offer, but as a companion to the multiple playthroughs of the single-player campaign you really should be doing, it's fine. Good, even. Plus there's always the chance you'll find yourself addicted to the levelling system, though we do doubt that.

> As an additional, optional mode for an already-great game there's no faulting Dead Space 2's multiplayer

www.imagineshop.co.uk

online reviews

ーミナル

それはどのようによかったか。

This annoying attack can be quite successful.

Murphy could probably do with some help here.

It's not a game worth buying for the multiplayer experience alone, and it doesn't do anything we haven't seen before elsewhere. But as an additional, optional mode for an already-great game there's no faulting *Dead Space 2*'s multiplayer. It doesn't set the world on fire, but it does bring something that genuinely adds something – if only a little – to the overall experience of the game.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

While nothing more than a distraction from the main game, *Dead Space 2*'s multiplayer is nonetheless a good distraction. Keeping things within the confines of the universe and offering up modes that fit the game's logic isn't a masterstroke – but it works.

★★★☆☆

MODE SEVEN?

No no, just Mode One

THERE AREN'T MANY modes on *Dead Space 2* – in fact, it's all pretty much one mode, just with different objectives. Whether it's flicking switches, attacking an area or any of a few other aims, it all falls under the same gore-encrusted umbrella. As for the Necromorph objective? Kill the humans, naturally. While it sounds like the multiplayer is lacking as a result of this perceived lack of content, it doesn't feel that way. As MP is so clearly not the main attraction of the game – the stellar single-player takes that role – it's difficult to find fault with the fact we aren't presented with three/four/five different modes. If anything, we're happy that Visceral and co didn't just resort to standard deathmatch, team deathmatch and capture the flag modes. Instead it's something far less varied, but far more fitting.

PSN Roundup

GRAN TURISMO 5

Getting better by the day

Publisher Sony Computer Entertainment **Developer** Polyphony Digital **Price** £49.99
Players 1-16 **Genre** Driving

Gran Turismo 5 is proving itself to be a rather strange beast. A constant flow of updates has seen review scores looking less relevant as time progresses, and this is no different when it comes to *Gran Turismo 5*'s online mode. Initially a mere shell of a mode, it is now – at the time of writing – pretty much fully formed, with many options available for those who are hosting races. XP can now be accumulated while online, regular seasonal events take place at different times of year and the most recent addition – again, at the time of writing – saw online dealerships added.

While it's only a four-star mode at this moment in time, we're confident that in a few months' time that will have leapt up to a five.

ID ★★★★★

NAIL'D

Or as we call it, Nail Dee

Publisher Deep Silver **Developer** Tech Light **Price** £39.99 **Players** 1-8 **Genre** Racing

Nail Dee from developer Tech Light is okay. It's alright. It's decent. Not exactly the kind of definitive opinion cutting swathes through masses of umming and aahing you might have bought this magazine for but then *Nail Dee* doesn't really deserve it, if we're honest. Because it's simply an average game. No more, no less. Given the modes don't extend beyond Free Race, what you're left with is the racing itself. It's here that the wonky collision detection frustrates you more and the lack of stunts bores you more but even so, it chugs along at its own pace and becomes strangely hypnotic for a while. Still, it feels

like an online experience that's more inline with a PlayStation Network title than a full-price affair. Just like the single-player mode, then.

RK ★★☆☆☆

NBA JAM

Boomshakalasigh

Publisher EA **Developer** EA **Price** £39.99 **Players** 1-4 **Genre** Sports

Basketball players, by their very nature, drop the ball all the time. We believe it's called bouncing or something weird like that. Whatever it is they do, that doesn't explain why EA has dropped the ball, besides allowing this writer to create witty linked introductions like the one you just read. There are no lobbies. Given the *NBA Jam* heritage is essentially that of multiplayer gaming, it's a rather bizarre oversight and makes finding matches among the scant *NBA Jam* owners out there even more difficult. Then there are some weird lag syncing issues when you do play a match, to reinforce that it's not worth fighting

through the lack of lobbies to begin with. Just go online with the Mega Drive version instead. We know it's not possible but trying will be more fun.

RK ★☆☆☆☆

Dead Nation GAME

So many zombies, so little time...

DETAILS

Publisher
Sony Europe
Developer
Housemarque
Release Date
Out Now
Price
£9.99
Players
1-2
Genre
Arcade

Surely the PS3 doesn't need yet another zombie game? After all, we've already been treated to the likes of *Burn Zombie Burn* and *Zombie Apocalypse*, so surely we don't need another top-down zombie blaster? Well, as a matter of fact we do.

Dead Nation isn't without its flaws, but it's the closest the PS3 has come to emulating Valve's excellent *Left 4 Dead* series. Unlike its zombie peers, *Dead Nation* actually has a lot more in common with Team17's *Alien Breed* series, although its online structure makes it far superior. In short, it's the best top-down shooter that's currently available on PSN.

Developed by the same team that made *Super Stardust HD*, *Dead Nation* is a visually stunning game that sees a lone survivor – or survivors if you're playing with a friend – trying to survive a zombie apocalypse.

The weakest part of *Dead Nation* is definitely its story, which is an old hoary piece of work that could have been cut out from a dozen zombie films. It involves government conspiracies, rather average voice acting and an ending that you can see coming from a mile off. Worry not, though, for *Dead Nation*'s relentless gameplay will have you playing until the last cheesy bit of dialogue is displayed on screen.

The first thing that impresses about *Dead Nation* is its sheer size. This is a large title for a download game, with ten massive levels to fight through. Although you're initially equipped with a few basic weapons you'll soon be able to get your hands on a whole range of devastating items ranging from shotguns to rocket launchers. Money can be found in the back of cars, in chests or on defeated zombies and handy weapon shops are liberally scattered around each stage.

> The closest the PlayStation 3 has come to emulating Valve's excellent Left 4 Dead series

Weapon shops allow you to alter the range of a weapon's fire, its power, rate of fire, ammo held and lots more and it's also possible to grab hold of other useful devices such as mines, flashes and grenades which can be similarly upgraded. It's also possible to upgrade the body armour you're wearing, but unlike weapons you have to find new upgrades as you explore the ten huge levels.

These stages are not only teeming with thousands of zombies, but they also contain some truly magnificent lighting effects. Indeed, part of *Dead Nation*'s power is that it's an incredibly scary experience, with the eerie lighting and clever use of sound making for plenty of pant-shitting instances of terror. There's nothing more horrifying than having to mow down a horde of zombies with only the light of a diminishing flare for company.

It doesn't end there, though. There's a huge range of different enemies to destroy

Store Reviews

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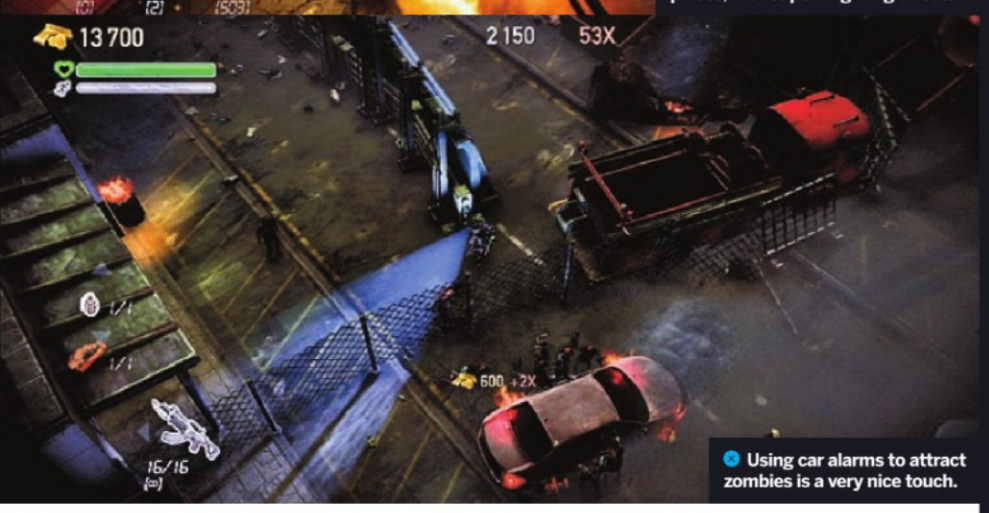
Zombies attack relentlessly on the higher difficulty levels, so be prepared.

The visuals truly are impressive in places, with superb lighting effects.



Using car alarms to attract zombies is a very nice touch.

– including some bloody big boss types that are devastatingly lethal if they're not handled quickly – plenty of hidden secrets to discover and lovely little touches like setting off a car alarm to distract nearby zombies.

Yes, the very nature of the gameplay means that it can get rather samey at times, but take the battle online and team up with a friend and it remains a fresh and exciting blaster. What a pity then that even the normal difficulty is so insanely hard it's likely to put many gamers off.

Darran Jones

VERDICT

It's a little too tough for its own good and the online play is occasionally laggy, but this is another polished effort from Housemarque. Just be sure that you don't play it with the lights off, or on your own.

86%

LIVE ZOMBIES

Killing zombies online is fun

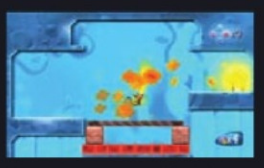
ONE THING WE like about *Dead Nation* is its involved online mode. Online play is laggy at times and doesn't support voice chat, but it is great fun. There are no new gameplay modes, but a constant stream of announcements that range from useful facts to the number of zombies you've killed all adds to the sense of community that *Dead Nation* is trying to create. Having to wait for your score to upload to the servers is annoying, but knowing you've contributed to the 24 million zombies that have been killed in the UK is very satisfying.

Store Roundup

FUNKY LAB RAT GAME

Move over Lemmings

Publisher Hydravision Entertainment **Developer** In-House **Price** £5.49 **Players** 1 **Genre** Puzzle



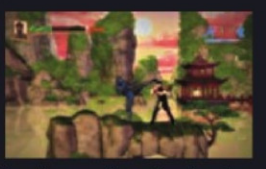
HERE'S A RARITY, a game that works equally well with and without Move support. *Funky Lab Rat* is a charming little puzzler that puts you in the furry feet of Diego, a super-charged lab rat. Initially all you can do is jump, but as you progress you'll be able to pause time and manipulate on-screen objects and rewind time. It's occasionally let down by wonky physics and its later stages are ridiculously mind-bendingly hard, but it's still worth considering if you enjoy the genre.

70%

KUNG-FU LIVE GAME

You won't be kung-fu fighting for long

Publisher Virtual Air Guitar Company **Developer** In-House **Price** £10.99 **Players** 1-5 **Genre** Beat-'em-up



WE REALLY LIKE *Kung-Fu Live*'s concept. Transporting yourself on screen and then beating up hundreds of enemies sounds fun but the reality is very different. The settings you need to pull this off simply don't exist in the average gamer's room – we tried three rooms with various lighting conditions – making it a nightmare to set up. Even if you do find optimal conditions you'll soon realise that half your moves are never accurate, because the camera can't keep up with your movement.

42%

WORMS BATTLE ISLANDS GAME (PSP)

Ever had that feeling of déjà vu?

Publisher: Team17 **Developer:** In-House **Price:** £15.99 **Players:** 1-4 **Genre:** Strategy

WORMS IS A funny old franchise. On the one hand it's great fun and very addictive, on the other, it's pretty much the same game it was 15 years ago. *Battle Islands* offers a few nice ideas such as the ability to enhance weapons and a puzzle mode, but this is largely the same old *Worms*. Personally we love Team17's game, but the concept is starting to grate a little now. Maybe, it's because it's only been a little while since we played *Worms 2 Armageddon*, but it's definitely time for a change.

80%

BEAT SKETCHER GAME

Music and patterns in harmony

Publisher Sony Europe **Developer** Sony Japan **Price** £7.99 **Players** 1-4 **Genre** Rhythm Action

WE DIDN'T EXPECT much from *Beat Sketcher*, so we were pleased to find out how well it works. Using the Move controller you simply draw pictures in time to music. It's a simple concept, but it's one that works exceptionally well and comes crammed with plenty of different options. You can input your own photos and draw over them, play dot to dot or paint as much of the screen as possible. It's not only a fun game, but shows off the Move brilliantly. Highly recommended.

85%

ALIEN BREED 2: ASSAULT GAME

Talk about bad timing

Publisher Team17 **Developer** In-House **Price** £7.19 **Players** 1-2 **Genre** Arcade Action

WELL THIS IS unfortunate for Team 17. It releases a sequel that's arguably better than its first PS3 offering, but it still gets eclipsed due to the superiority of *Dead Nation*. It's a shame because levels are well designed, there are a strong range of weapons and some great visuals. It lacks the manic pace of *Dead Nation*, but it remains an extremely well-rounded twin-stick shooter and is definitely worth picking up if *Dead Nation* didn't satisfy your lust for killing anything that moves.

82%

LARA CROFT AND THE GUARDIAN OF LIGHT CHALLENGE PACKS DLC

Lara's back

Publisher Square Enix **Developer** Crystal Dynamics **Price** £2.39 each **Players** 1-2 **Genre** Action Adventure

IF YOU ENJOYED Lara's last outing then these three packs are a great way of extending its longevity, as they offer four challenges apiece and plenty of new enemies and traps. None of the included challenges take particularly long to complete, but there's an impressive range to the three available packs and the leaderboards give you plenty of excuses to revisit your best scores. ★★★★★

The racing is quite exciting with lots of pleasing gory deaths.

The 'all-star' cast includes Sean Bean and Luke Goss of Bros fame.

Death Race 2

So bad it's actually sort of good

DETAILS

Price
£19.99
Sound
Dolby Digital 5.1
Director
Roel Reiné
Starring
Luke Goss, Danny Trejo, Ving Rhames, Sean Bean

When B-list action star Jason Statham passes on a sequel to one of his films, alarm bells immediately start ringing. It should come as no surprise then to learn that *Death Race 2* isn't a patch on its predecessor, which in turn wasn't a patch on the original *Death Race 2000*, which wasn't actually that good in the first place.

The funny thing about *Death Race 2* is that the concept is actually quite an entertaining one. It's just pulled off with all the finesse of a baboon trying to hammer a square peg into a round hole.

Death Race 2 tells the origins of Frankenstein; the masked racer who dies at the beginning of 2008's *Death Race*. Carl 'Luke' Lucas is a professional thief with his own sense of honour. We know this because when he shoots a cop in the opening bank heist he looks really upset and everything around him happens in slow motion.

After a surprisingly fun car chase he's eventually caught by the cops and sent to a notorious prison that films *Death Match*, the world's most popular TV show. *Death Match* is run by a real bitch. We know this because she has really bitchy lines and values TV ratings over human lives. Anyhoo. Luke is in trouble because the man he's protecting on the outside is convinced he won't stay loyal and wants him dead. So he gets harassed by the bitch while he's taking a shower, fights some people, shows his honourable side in slow motion, then gets entered into Death Race, which is started when the bitch needs to raise *Death Match*'s flagging ratings. We then get some high-octane racing, lots of gory deaths and discover how Luke turns into Frankenstein, the racer at the beginning of the original film. The end.

Needless to say this direct-to-video sequel/prequel/whatever is complete trash. And yet... we actually kind of like it. There's some wonderfully hammy support from Ving Rhames and Danny Trejo, the many deaths are ridiculously over the top and extremely gory to boot and the evil bitch gets what's coming to her in the end. Yes, the dialogue is atrocious and, yes, the constant reliance on slow motion to raise a dramatic point annoys, but we still managed to sit through it without wanting to tear our eyes out.

Presentation wise, *Death Race 2* is perfectly acceptable. It doesn't look as good as some of the bigger blockbusters but it does sport a surprisingly throaty soundtrack that really kicks in once the races begin. Even the extras are quite good, with some fun deleted scenes, interesting short features and a hilarious commentary that's unintentionally funny because the director seems convinced that he's created one of the greatest movies ever.

We wouldn't recommend that you buy *Death Race 2* as it's not that good, but it works as a rental with some mates and a few cold beers. Just be sure to drink the beers first.

Darran Jones

VERDICT

It's awful, but somehow the earnestness with which it all plays out makes it far more enjoyable than it deserves to be. A definite rent even if it isn't an immediate purchase.
RATING: ★★★★★

Plus all the latest hardware reviews

Blu-ray Reviews

それはどのようによかったか。

The Hole

PRICE: £24.99
SOUND: DTS-HD MA 5.1
DIRECTOR: Joe Dante
STARRING: Chris Massoglia, Nathan Gamble, Teri Polo

JOE DANTE, THE director behind Eighties hits such as *Gremlins* and *Innerspace*, is back with another scary kid's movie. While it loses out on the 3D effects that the cinema **version** boasted, *The Hole* still works because it's a genuinely tense thriller that's supported by a terrific young cast. A tense, enjoyable thriller with lots of twists and turns. **DJ**

RATING: ★★★★★

The Town

PRICE: £25.99
SOUND: DTS-HD MA 5.1
DIRECTOR: Ben Affleck
STARRING: Ben Affleck, Rebecca Hall, Jon Hamm

AFTER IMPRESSING IN his directorial debut *Gone Baby Gone*, Ben Affleck is back with his take on the heist movie. While the story is something of a cliché – four lifelong friends rob a bank and have to face the consequences as the net closes around them – it's backed up by some top performances and Affleck's impeccable direction. **DJ**

RATING: ★★★★★

Wall Street 2: Money Never Sleeps

PRICE: £27.99
SOUND: DTS-HD MA 5.1
DIRECTOR: Oliver Stone
STARRING: Michael Douglas, Shia LaBeouf, Carey Mulligan

DESPITE THE RETURN of Oliver Stone and Michael Douglas reprising the role of Gordon Gecko, this sequel lacks the bite of its predecessor. Add in an unconvincing performance from LaBeouf as a hard-nosed trader and the end result is a very disappointing sequel. **DJ**

RATING: ★★★★★

The Long Kiss Goodnight

PRICE: £18.37
SOUND: DTS-HD MA 5.1
DIRECTOR: Renny Harlin
STARRING: Geena Davis, Samuel L Jackson, David Morse

GEENA DAVIS PLAYS a doting mother turned vicious assassin in Renny Harlin's deliciously nutty thriller. Some of the action **scenes now** look rather dated, but *The Long Kiss Goodnight* is saved thanks to a cracking turn from Samuel L Jackson and a sharp script from Shane Black. **DJ**

RATING: ★★★★★

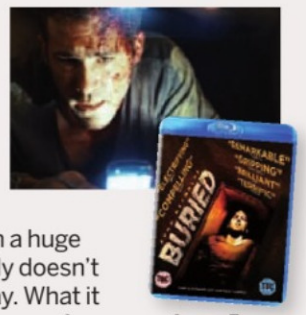
Red

PRICE: £24.99
SOUND: Dolby Digital 5.1
DIRECTOR: Robert Schwentke
STARRING: Bruce Willis, John Malkovich, Helen Mirren

THERE'S SOMETHING AMUSING about an ageing Bruce Willis still portraying the same stereotype that made him famous in **the Eighties**. Sadly a kid-friendly rating and a thin central concept gets tired long before the movie's end. Stick with the original graphic novel instead. **DJ**

RATING: ★★★★★

Buried



PRICE: £15.99
SOUND: DTS-HD MA 5.1
DIRECTOR: Rodrigo Cortes
STARRING: Ryan Reynolds, Samantha Mathis

DIMINISHED BY NOT being on a huge cinema screen, *Buried* definitely doesn't pack the same punch on Blu-ray. What it does deliver though is a stunning performance from Ryan Reynolds who wakes up in a coffin, with no idea how he got there and some amazingly clever camera tricks that really drive home his plight. **DJ**

RATING: ★★★★★

HD Reviews

TVs and media systems that'll make your home entertainment come to life

Sony BDP-S570B

PRICE: £174.99
DIMENSIONS: 430 x 206 x 50mm

IF YOU'RE LOOKING for an alternative Blu-ray player then you could do a lot worse than this effort from Sony. Like many new players it's 3D compatible, and has built in Wi-Fi in order to receive the latest updates. It boasts 1GB of memory, iPhone control and even the ability to download free online videos.

★★★★★

Panasonic DMP-BD45EB-K

PRICE: £95.44
DIMENSIONS: 430 x 207 x 49mm

YOU WON'T FIND 3D capability on this budget player, but this is still a pretty decent buy for its price point. There's a USB port for MP3 playback, an SD Image Viewer for watching films and images from an SD card and the ability to play back high-definition audio. Yes, it's cheap, but it's cheerful to boot and a bargain at under £100.

★★★★★

Samsung BD-C6500

PRICE: £169.95
DIMENSIONS: 433 x 205 x 43mm

THIS MID-RANGE player initially appears to be a bargain, but the lack of 3D support is something of an issue for us. Still it does offer built in Wi-Fi (which will hopefully support a 3D update), the ability to watch internet channels and up to 7.1 audio output. It's rather pricey, but remains a good all-round player.

★★★★★

Blu-ray Charts™

UK Top 5

1. **Inception**
Christopher Nolan delivers another blockbuster that tickles the cerebral glands as well as the adrenalin ones.
RATING: ★★★★★

2. **Toy Story 3**
A stunning transfer and a staggering array of extras are the greatest way to finish off the *Toy Story* trilogy.
RATING: ★★★★★

3. **Avatar: Extended Collector's Edition**
The same film with new footage and an impressive range of extras.
RATING: ★★★★★

4. **The Pacific**
It doesn't match the emotional heights of *Band Of Brothers*, but it's a worthy follow-up.
RATING: ★★★★★

5. **The Twilight Saga: Eclipse**
After the awful *New Moon* it's good to see *Twilight* is on track again.
RATING: ★★★★★

US Top 5

1. **Inception**
After storming the US box office it's no surprise to see *Inception* at number one on Blu-ray.
RATING: ★★★★★

2. **Avatar: Extended Collector's Edition**
How can so many people in the world have such poor taste?
RATING: ★★★★★

3. **Toy Story 3**
The third part of Pixar's excellent trilogy enjoys a strong position in the US charts.
RATING: ★★★★★

4. **Despicable Me**
This CGI vehicle for Steve Carell is already riding high in the American charts.
RATING: ★★★★★

5. **The Twilight Saga: Eclipse**
Buffness with an interesting story and surprisingly witty banter.
RATING: ★★★★★

Best of the Eighties

1. **Ghostbusters**
This is easily the best comedy blockbuster of all time and all these years later, it still holds up damn well. Plus it has Bill Murray.

2. **Back To The Future Trilogy**
Incredible films, incredible value and it would have made number one spot if it wasn't for Bill Murray.

3. **Die Hard**
The original anti-hero who gave birth (not literally) to pretty much every action movie with attitude that followed in its wake.

4. **Alien Anthology**
Arguably the best sci-fi horror of all time and best sci-fi action of all time that feel as fresh now as they did back then. Plus two bonus films!

5. **Blade Runner**
Exactly the kind of film Blu-Ray was made for, as high definition makes the attention to detail sparkle. Atmospheric and moody.

UNDER THE INFLUENCE... The games that changed it all

We'd never seen anything like it when *GTA III* was released.

Stealing cars and killing innocents – *GTA III* was everything we'd ever wanted in a videogame.

GRAND THEFT AUTO III

Release date 26 October 2001 • **Publisher** Take-Two • **Developer** DMA Design
Games it influenced Saints Row • Just Cause • Red Faction: Guerrilla

We asked numerous developers and other such gaming personalities across the world for their votes on the most influential game in the history of PlayStation back in issue 200. The result was never in doubt. *Grand Theft Auto III* brought about a genuine revolution in game design the likes of which hasn't been seen since – we're still riding the wave of imitators that came in its wake.

Looking back it's a bit of an odd one. There was hype behind the game, but not to anything like the levels we've become accustomed to with more recent Rockstar releases. This was the company's real breakthrough hit, and as such it was still operating by the same rules as everyone else – standard previews, standard reviews... and then something happened. Everyone in the world realised, at the same time, that the game was absolutely effing marvellous.

Videogames changed from that point on. That's not hyperbole, that's not exaggeration or overstatement in any way – the release of *GTA III* forever changed the face of videogames. After all, it let you beat up a granny with a baseball bat. It let you drive a stolen car off a ramp, flip it, crash into a group of people and escape before the vehicle exploded into a ball of flame. In 2000 we were playing *Midnight Club: Street Racing*. In 2001 we were playing the same game, but with the ability to get out of the car, stab a hooker then get in a speedboat and escape from the law in a thoroughly nautical fashion.

> GTA III changed the face of videogames forever

It's easy to just say 'things were changed' and tell you 'no, we really mean it', but they were. If you weren't around at the time – if you were too young to be a gamer, if you have no idea of what gaming had been like up to that point, then it's hard to explain and it's hard to understand. The release of *Grand Theft Auto III* was videogame enlightenment – it set a new standard and it changed the world... of gaming.

WHAT WE SAID: Issue 82 • 98%

"Look in the back of the magazine and see the scores we have given every other PlayStation game then deduct 20 per cent, because a new standard has arrived by which all past and future games must be judged."

THE FUTURE ACCORDING TO PLAYSTATION

2097 IS GOING TO BE A VERY interesting year indeed by the sounds of it. Not only will *WipEout*'s already amazing races become a lot more exciting and fun – but the G-Police will also be putting down criminal uprisings on Callisto, colonised moon of Jupiter.

The G-Police won't be messing around in 2097.

We *REALLY* want to see *Silent Bomber* on the PSN.

YOU NEVER PLAYED THIS...

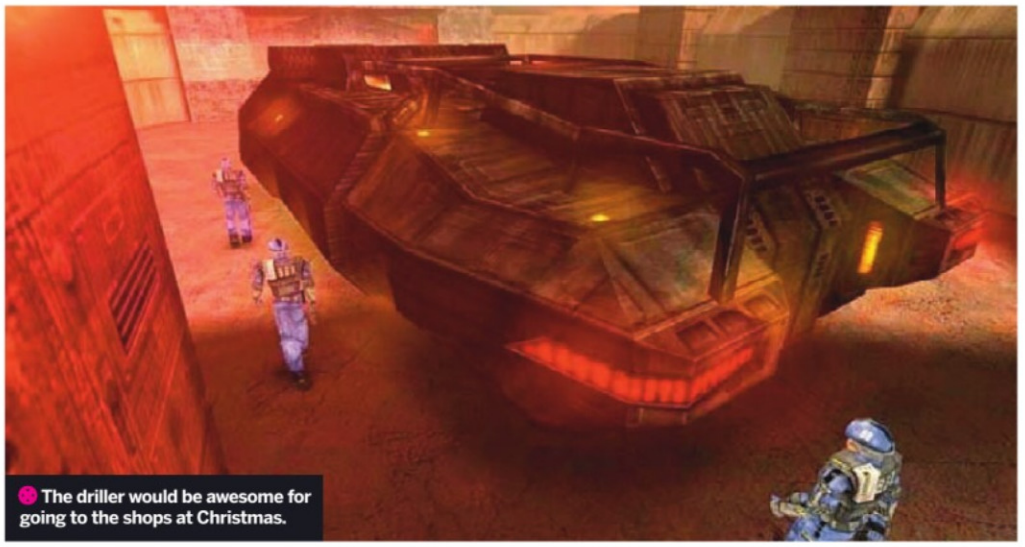
SILENT BOMBER

By July of 2000, when *Silent Bomber* was released, we were gearing up for the release of the PS2. That's 'we' as in 'most of Europe'. As such, this wonderfully original, fun game was lost to the ether, forgotten before it even had a chance to establish itself and generally consigned to be left off the best-of lists of all but the most dedicated gamers. Like us, then. That's 'us' as in 'we at **Play** magazine'.

Silent Bomber was an arcade game, pretty much – just one that hadn't been released in an arcade. There was a nonsense story – characters had names, that kind of thing – but generally speaking this was all utterly irrelevant. What *was* relevant was how it played. Fast-paced action as the player scuttled around, dropping bombs and detonating them, blowing up robots and generally being a nuisance. Think the bombs you can drop in Lara Croft and the *Guardian Of Light* and you're on the right tracks. But an entire game based around it. With added skill, combos, upgrades and things like that.

Basically in writing about it we want to play it again. It's available on the Japanese PSN, but there's been no word of a US or EU release, unfortunately. Still, for a few quid on certain online auction sites, it wouldn't exactly hurt to give it a go.

WE WANT THIS...



The driller would be awesome for going to the shops at Christmas.

RED FACTION'S DRILLER

Who needs subtlety, or even the slightest element of safety? Not us. As such, the driller featured in the original *Red Faction* (an obvious nod to *Total Recall*'s 'Mole') is perfect for our every need. Just so long as our every need involves drilling through massive walls of rock for no real reason. Yes, you can claim it's for the purpose of mining, but how many times have we ever seen them – both in *Red Faction AND Total Recall* – used for the purpose they were designed? Never. As such, we want the driller to act as our own personal PlayMobile. We could travel the world in it, bringing PlayStationy goodness to everyone on Earth. Also, we could pretty much travel in a straight line with little to no hindrance.

RETRO GAMES WE SAID WE WANT TO PLAY AGAIN BUT PROBABLY WON'T...

MediEvil

LOOKING THROUGH 15 years of PlayStation history we were drawn to Sir Daniel Fortesque: an oft-overlooked character. We wanted to play *MediEvil* again, to experience this fine dead chap once more but we don't own the game, so we didn't.

Resident Evil 2

A FAIR BIT of *Resident Evil* talk made us consider going back to *Resi 2* – the previous best in the series, before number four came out. Already downloaded from PlayStation Network and raring to go, we found that... we couldn't be bothered.

FIFA 2000

IT'S OFTEN AN interesting thing to consider, how a series has evolved over the years. A decade ago we were playing *Pro Evolution Soccer* instead of this, so we wanted to see what we had missed out on. Then we just didn't bother.

Ico

EVERYONE TALKS ABOUT it, while most people haven't actually played it. We wanted to remedy this in the team members who hadn't yet played *Ico*. Then we thought, 'what's the point? It's coming out in HD in a bit'. So we didn't.

LITTLEBIGPLANET 2

TRIBUTE LEVELS

Play picks some of its favourite homages from the LittleBigPlanet 2 beta

SACKENSTEIN 3D BY RAPHAEI

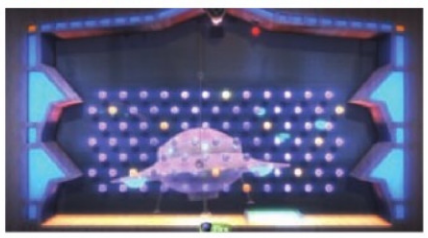
HOPEFULLY YOU CAN tell that this level was inspired by the FPS godfather that is *Wolfenstein 3D*.

Faking the 3D effect is something lots of creators will look to do. This level even has doors that can be opened and closed.

It is a kind of score-attack game as the objective is simply to survive for four minutes and kill as many foes as possible.

It even has an indicator for when you get shot as well as a reload mechanic. A very promising start for *LBP 2*'s community.

PEGGED BY CHIMPANZEE



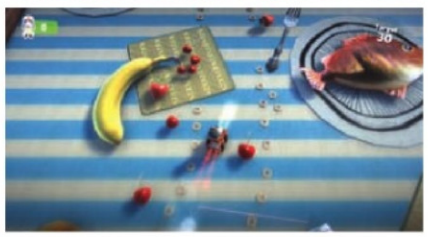
HERE AT PLAY we're huge fans of *Peggle*, so you can imagine our excitement at finding Chimpanzee's game.

Lots of key features have been re-created such as the sound effects for hitting each peg and bonus shots like this Long Shot.

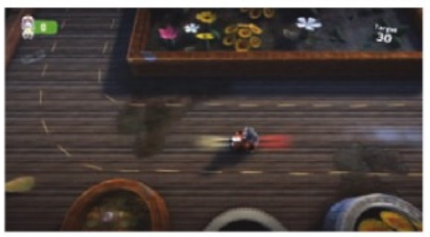
At the bottom there is a pad for catching the ball. Like the real thing, getting the ball in there will give you a bonus ball.

Thanks to the sequencer it's even possible to create a rendition of *Ode To Joy*, the classic tune that greets triumph in *Peggle*.

SACKRO MACHINES 2 BY SPLAPP-ME-DO

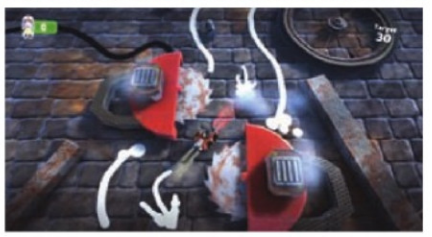


WE'VE MENTIONED SACKRO Machines 2 before and it's still impressive. A great example of things to come.



The top-down view (which is the side view, but with the camera going up and down the back wall) offers lots of possibilities.

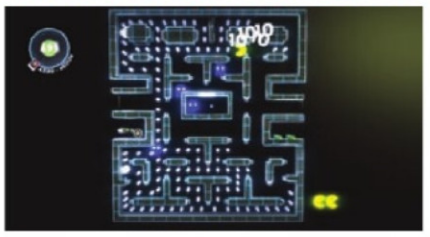
We were impressed with the handling. Slower corner taking needed tweaking but there was some nice power-sliding there.



Intricate driving through obstacles was not so easy, but it was nice to see some traps included in the design.

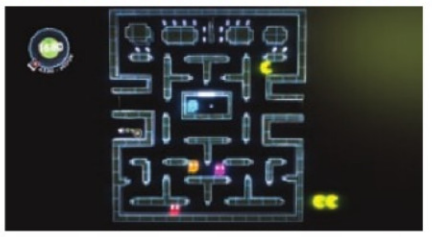
PAC-MAN BY ANDRMT

WE TALKED TO Andrmt about his *Pac-Man* level in issue 198. Despite others attempting their own, this is still the best.



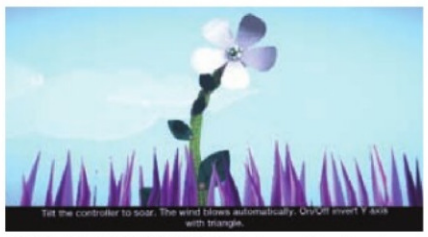
With its use of power-ups and ghost AI it is more or less a perfect re-creation of the arcade classic.

This kind of score-based gaming is perfect for *LittleBigPlanet* and you'll find similar arcade favourites in MM's creations.



One thing that is different is that Pac-Man has a little more room to move around in this game than in the original.

SACK FLOWER BY RAPHAEI



AN IMPRESSIVE LEVEL from Raphaei once again attempting to master the first-person view in this re-creation of *Flower*.

Like the original, your objective is to reach as many flowers as you can to make them blossom and bring more life to the world.

The most impressive part of this game is the fact that it's tilt controlled, just like the real thing.

Raphaei has added some nice transitions between areas, making it seem as if the game is going from day into dusk.

BOMBERMAN BY ATOMICCREATIVITY

BOMBERMAN IS ANOTHER classic console game that makes a great addition to *LittleBigPlanet 2*.

Because of the accurate physics involved in destroying things with explosives in *LBP 2*, this was harder than the real thing.

With four players the carnage would have been something to behold, but this single-player playthrough showed promise.

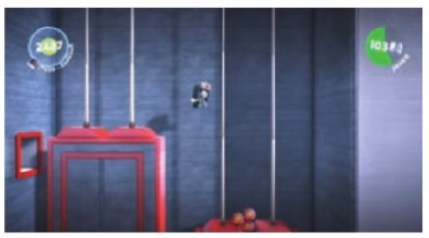
We liked the surrounding detail as the Sackbots, dressed like Bomberman, were animated and bobbed around happily.

MIRRORS EDGE – MINE & M8'S EDITION BY SGTJOHNO

THIS IS A fairly basic platforming level, but with a good theme and design it's become a great *Mirror's Edge* tribute level.

Bounce pads on the end of ramps make it possible for Sackboy to make death-defying leaps from rooftop to rooftop.

Zip lines make this level much more interactive and helps pick up the pace nicely at a crucial moment.



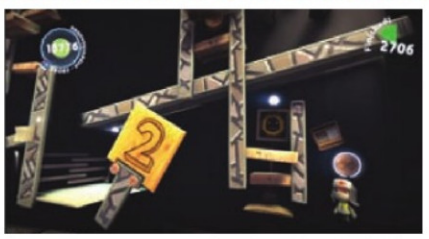
The camera angle helps you to navigate the level as you can always see the red highlighted exits and entrances.

DONKEY KONGA – TWISTED RENDITION BY PUPPETHAND666

A QUICK CUT-SCENE lets you know you've entered an interesting take on the *Donkey Kong* formula.

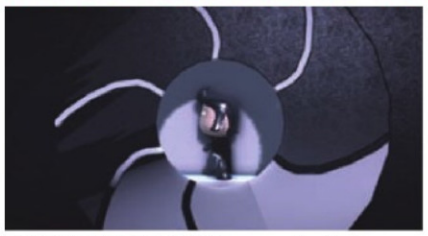
The placement of ladders and the speed of the burning barrels made for a really good mix of challenge, luck and skill.

Defeating 'Donkey Kong' resulted in another little cut-scene and lots of prize bubbles emerging for you to go and pop.



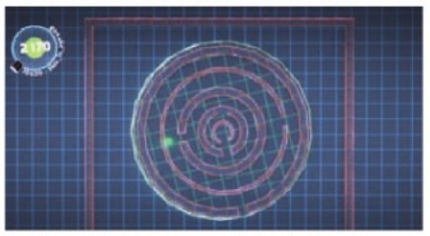
As soon as we were done bursting bubbles we were flung into Level 2 and the menace of electrically charged barrels.

JAMES BOND 007 IN "SACKFINGER" BY PADDDY5



THIS JAMES BOND homage includes a cut-scene with the famous barrel-view intro for *Bond* and a cat-stroking villain.

A simple game involving the paint gun as a dual-purpose bugging device and tranquiliser for the Sackbot guards.



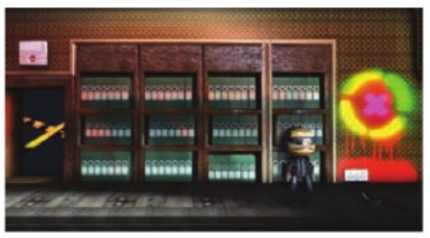
We knew things were getting interesting, though, when we faced this clever little hacking mini-game.

It ended with an action-packed car chase involving lots of enemy vehicles crashing and a helicopter dropping bombs on you.

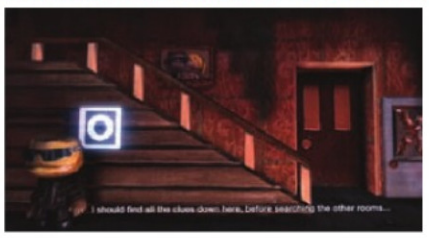
THE LOST BY STANDBY250

THE LOST IS one of our favourite *LBP 2* levels so far, paying tribute to *Heavy Rain*. This is the beginning of a murder mystery.

The music is a re-creation of the theme and it even had a rain drop credit sequence at the start. This is its investigation system.

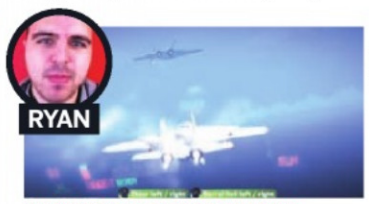


By activating this system you can move a cursor over objects and find out if there are any clues.



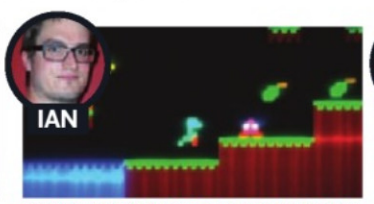
You have to find all the clues before you move on to the next area and ultimately solve the mystery of the killer.

TEAM PICKS



SACK FIGHTER DOGFIGHT BY RAPHAEI This *After Burner*-style game was unbelievable. It even had overheating guns.

AT-ST (MECHWALKER) BY CK2046 There was no level here, but the mechanics of this walker were still very impressive.



IGUANADON PIXEL PLATFORMER BY MR_HIJINX We loved this classic platform game that made good use of the holographic material.

SKY TOWN: DARKENED SKIES BY JUMP_BUTTON A fine use of physics and classic gameplay that isn't just a platformer.

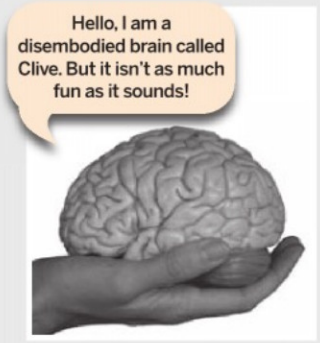
Watch More! Watch direct feed videos of these levels on this issue's Play DVD

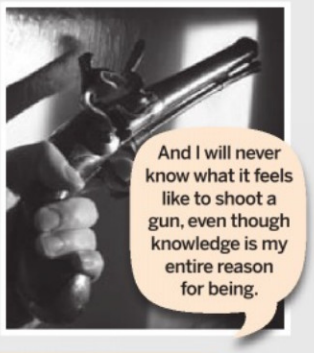
PlayList

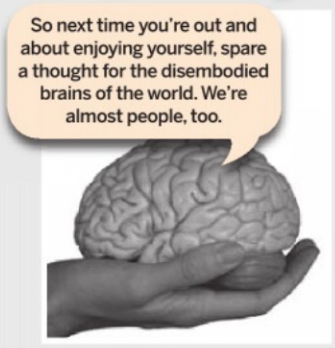
If you want to know what a game scored then these pages are for you

GAME UNDER

Stock photography, fictitious stories, real lives...







PS3 LISTING

game	issue	score
3D Collection	195	75%
3D Dot Game Heroes	**192**	**87%**
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	177	70%
Afro Samurai	**177**	**61%**
Agarest: Generations Of War	187	78%
Alpha Protocol	**193**	**83%**
Aliens Vs Predator	189	79%
Alone In The Dark	**173**	**70%**
Armored Core For Answer	173	65%
Armored Core 4	**153**	**67%**
Army Of Two	164	80%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	**188**	**65%**
Ashes Cricket 2009	183	30%
Assassin's Creed	**161**	**58%**
Assassin's Creed II	186	89%
Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood	**199**	**91%**

More than enough additions to take the *Assassin's Creed* formula into modern classic territory.

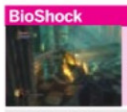
Atelier Rorona: The Alchemist Of Arland	**198**	**77%**
Backbreaker	193	70%
Band Hero	**187**	**68%**
Batman: Arkham Asylum	183	85%
Battle Fantasia	**176**	**67%**
Battlefield: Bad Company	168	78%
Battlefield: Bad Company 2	**190**	**93%**

Single-player is fairly impressive but take it online and it's bordering on genius. This is quite possibly the best shooter on PS3 today.

Bayonetta*	**187**	**93%**

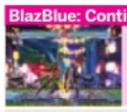
The most over-the-top, inventive, consistently thrilling, overtly sexual, guiltily enjoyable Japanese action game we've played in years.

Beijing 2008	168	54%
Beowulf	**161**	**61%**
Bionic Commando	179	82%
BioShock	**172**	**93%**



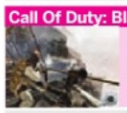
This FPS-adventure hybrid has been admirably translated to the PS3. The most atmospheric game of our time.

BioShock 2	189	88%
BlackSite	**163**	**43%**
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	160	58%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger	**190**	**85%**
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift	**198**	**94%**



With its diverse roster, stunning visuals and furiously paced gameplay, *Continuum Shift* is a must-have for beat-'em-up fans.

Blazing Angels	151	54%
Blitz: The League II	**172**	**67%**
Blur	193	86%
Borderlands	**185**	**80%**
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	75%
Brütal Legend	**185**	**79%**
Burnout Paradise	162	74%
Buzz!: Quiz TV	**168**	**82%**
Buzz! Quiz World	185	70%
Call Of Duty 3	**151**	**77%**
Call Of Duty: World At War	173	68%
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	**160**	**88%**
Call Of Duty: Black Ops	**199**	**94%**



Treyarch's first genuinely brilliant entry to the series and a standard-bearer for fast-paced online shooters.

Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	181	85%
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow	**197**	**85%**

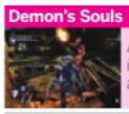
game	issue	score
Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena	178	87%
Civilization Revolution	**168**	**90%**

The popular PC series makes its way to the PS3, so you can while away your hours playing this instead of doing important things.

Clash Of The Titans	**193**	**65%**
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	84%
Colin McRae: DiRT	**158**	**91%**

Quite simply the second-best rally game on the PS3. Still, if simulation is what you're after then go for this over *Sega Rally*.

Colin McRae: DiRT 2	**184**	**87%**
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	178	65%
Conan	**160**	**71%**
Condemned 2	165	78%
Conflict: Denied Ops	**164**	**50%**
Create	199	71%
Cross Edge	**182**	**59%**
Damnation	181	38%
Dante's Inferno	**189**	**80%**
Dark Sector	165	62%
Dark Void	**188**	**81%**
Darksiders	188	83%
Dead Rising 2	**197**	**78%**
Dead Space	172	87%
Dead To Rights: Retribution	**192**	**68%**
Def Jam: Icon	151	79%
Def Jam Rapstar	**199**	**72%**
Demon's Souls	**193**	**92%**

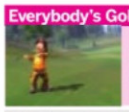


As good as it was when we reviewed it on import, but with a better translation and it's also available here. One of PS3's best games.

Destroy All Humans!: Path Of The Furon	**178**	**29%**
Devil May Cry 4	163	89%
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	**175**	**81%**
DJ Hero	**186**	**91%**

It's just like playing *Guitar Hero* for the first time all over again, although *DJ Hero* is slightly more expensive.

DJ Hero 2	198	88%
Dragon Age: Origins	**186**	**82%**
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	40%
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	**168**	**61%**
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam	160	40%
Dynasty Warriors Gundam 2	**176**	**43%**
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	189	37%
Dynasty Warriors 6	**164**	**30%**
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	181	44%
EA Sports Active 2	**200**	**81%**
EA Sports MMA	198	89%
Eat Lead	**178**	**38%**
Enchanted Arms	152	69%
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	**168**	**60%**
Enslaved: Odyssey To The West	197	83%
Eternal Sonata	**176**	**87%**
Everybody's Golf 5*	158	88%
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	**165**	**91%**



The most recent *Tiger Woods* game may have been rubbish, but don't worry because *Everybody's Golf* is bloody brilliant.

Eye Of Judgment	159	65%
EyePet	**185**	**83%**
EyePet: Move	197	84%
F1 2010	**197**	**86%**
FaceBreaker	170	55%
Fairytale Fights	**186**	**51%**
Fallout 3	**173**	**97%**

Fallout 3 lives up to its promise and then some. It's a damning portrayal of the consequences of war, and a compelling RPG experience.

Fallout: New Vegas	**198**	**88%**
Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	39%
Far Cry 2	**172**	**74%**

game	issue	score
F.E.A.R.	151	81%
F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin	**176**	**87%**
FIFA 08	159	84%
FIFA 09	**171**	**87%**
FIFA 10	**184**	**90%**

The best football game made marginally better. The crown held by *PES* seems like so long ago now.

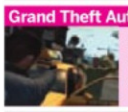
FIFA 11	**197**	**91%**

FIFA continues to improve and continues to dominate with this latest addition to the superior footy franchise.

FIFA Street 3	**163**	**66%**
FIFA World Cup 2010	192	70%
Fight Night Round 3	**151**	**87%**
Fight Night Round 4	181	84%
Final Fantasy XIII	**190**	**85%**
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage	198	51%
Folklore	**158**	**66%**
Formula One Championship Edition	151	72%
Fracture	**171**	**72%**
Front Mission Evolved	198	52%
Fuel	**180**	**49%**
Full Auto 2: Battlelines	151	69%
G-Force	**183**	**59%**
Genji: Days Of The Blade	151	38%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	**157**	**83%**
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	80%
GI Joe	**183**	**22%**
God Of War Collection*	**188**	**93%**

Two of the greatest PS2 action games of all time come together at a bargain price. Essential purchase.

God Of War III	**190**	**88%**
Gran Turismo 5	200	85%
Gran Turismo 5 Prologue	**165**	**75%**
Grand Theft Auto IV	**166**	**98%**



If you haven't already bought it, then stop reading this box, put your shoes on and go out and get it! The best game ever? Probably.

Green Day: Rock Band	194	77%
GTA: Episodes From Liberty City	**191**	**94%**

Two fine expansions bundled together and without the need for *GTA IV* to play them. What more could you want.

Guitar Hero III	**160**	**90%**

Guitar Hero III is another great rhythm-action beast, sure to delight fans and newcomers alike. So, grab a guitar and rock out!

Guitar Hero 5	184	81%
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	**168**	**63%**
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	76%
Guitar Hero Metallica	**179**	**88%**
Guitar Hero: Van Halen	189	65%
Guitar Hero: Warriors Of Rock	**197**	**71%**
Guitar Hero World Tour	**173**	**95%**

World Tour just about manages to trump rival *Rock Band* with its entertaining music-creation tools, and quality peripherals.

Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 1	**200**	**21%**
Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	182	60%
Harry Potter: The Order Of The Phoenix	**155**	**32%**
Haze	167	64%
Heavenly Sword	**157**	**71%**
Heavy Rain	**189**	**94%**

It will certainly split opinion, but we absolutely love it. A valuable addition to the wonderful world of gaming.

Heavy Rain: Move Edition	198	70%
Heroes Over Europe	**184**	**48%**
Ice Age 3: Dawn Of The Dinosaurs	182	47%

This month's new entries

The newest games, freshly squeezed among all your old favourites

Gran Turismo 5 PS3	85%
The Sly Collection PS3	84%
NBA Jam PS3	68%
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 1 PS3	21%
Splatterhouse PS3	58%
EA Sports Active 2 PS3	81%
Tron Evolution PS3	17%
Prince Of Persia Trilogy PS3	88%
Ghost Recon: Predator PSP	60%
Split/Second: Velocity PSP	71%
Pac-Man Championship Edition DX PSN	91%
Castle Crashers PSN	88%
Crazy Taxi PSN	80%
Blacklight: Tango Down PSN	64%
Crescent Pale Mist PSN	70%

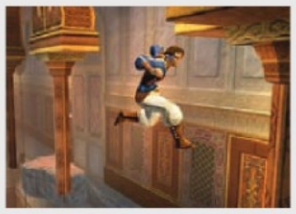
game	issue	score
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey	**183**	**72%**
inFamous	180	81%
International Cricket 2010	**194**	**61%**
Iron Man	166	58%
Iron Man 2	**193**	**50%**
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
James Bond 007: Blood Stone	**199**	**63%**
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	187	64%
John Daly's ProStroke Golf	**197**	**70%**
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	159	78%
Just Cause 2	**190**	**87%**
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	160	73%
Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days	**196**	**71%**
Katamari Forever	184	88%
Killzone 2	**176**	**93%**
Sony has proven that it has a PlayStation platform capable of supporting a truly world-class FPS. Best graphics ever.		
Kung Fu Rider	**196**	**65%**
Lair	158	52%
Last Rebellion	**191**	**42%**
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	174	54%
Legendary	**173**	**62%**
Lego Batman	173	65%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4	**194**	**79%**
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	167	73%
Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	**187**	**71%**
Lego Rock Band	187	75%
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	**160**	**76%**
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	180	24%
LittleBigPlanet	**172**	**94%**
Create, share and play. Sackboy heads up Media Molecule's highly customisable and adorable platformer.		
Lord Of The Rings: Aragorn's Quest	**199**	**60%**
Lost Planet 2	192	75%
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	**163**	**69%**
Lost: The Video Game	164	38%
LOTR: Conquest	**175**	**52%**
Madden NFL 07	151	82%
Madden NFL 08	**157**	**82%**
Madden NFL 09	170	83%
Madden NFL 10	**184**	**82%**
Madden NFL 11	196	84%
Mafia II	**196**	**81%**
MAG	189	68%
Majin And The Forsaken Kingdom	**199**	**72%**
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	151	64%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	**185**	**57%**
Medal Of Honor	198	86%
Medal Of Honor Airborne	**161**	**85%**
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	171	78%
Metal Gear Solid 4	**167**	**92%**
Not the final *Metal Gear Solid* game after all then. Still brilliant though, and still largely incomprehensible.		
Mobile Suit Gundam: Crossfire	151	37%
Modern Warfare 2	**186**	**94%**
A questionable single-player mode is rendered null and void by the best multiplayer we've ever played.		
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	**173**	**84%**
Mini Ninjas	184	80%
Mirror's Edge	**173**	**71%**
ModNation Racers	**192**	**90%**
The best kart racer by far on the PlayStation 3, but combined with incredible levels of creativity. If you love *LBP* you'll love this, too.		
Monster Madness	**170**	**78%**
Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe	173	68%

game	issue	score
MotoGP 08	**172**	**65%**
MotoGP 09/10	190	77%
MotorStorm	**151**	**92%**
With the addition of an online multiplayer, *MotorStorm* gets the score it deserves, and currently leads the lines for the next gen.		
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	**172**	**93%**
With its balls strapped firmly to the wall, *Pacific Rift* amplifies the drama of the original to create the PS3's best racing title.		
MX Vs ATV Reflex	189	68%
MX Vs ATV Untamed	**164**	**58%**
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	174	59%
NASCAR 08	**157**	**38%**
Naughty Bear	195	64%
NBA 07	**153**	**33%**
NBA 2K7	151	76%
NBA 2K8	**172**	**71%**
NBA 2K10	186	79%
NBA 2K11	**199**	**82%**
NBA Jam	200	68%
NBA Live 08	**158**	**59%**
NBA Live 09	170	81%
NBA Street: Homecourt	**151**	**68%**
Need For Speed Carbon	151	76%
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit	**199**	**91%**
Hot Pursuit is one of the best arcade racers of all time – pure, unadulterated bliss in game form.		
Need For Speed ProStreet	**161**	**86%**
Need For Speed Shift	184	81%
Need For Speed Undercover	**173**	**75%**
Nier	192	54%
NHL 2K7	**151**	**80%**
NHL 2K9	172	67%
NHL 2K10	**186**	**70%**
NHL 09	170	88%
NHL 10	**184**	**85%**
NHL 11	198	89%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	**154**	**88%**
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	184	82%
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	**185**	**78%**
Overlord: Raising Hell	167	65%
Overlord II	**181**	**68%**
Pain	183	69%
PES 2008	**159**	**70%**
PES 2009	172	80%
PES 2010	**185**	**72%**
PES 2011	197	73%
PixelJunk Racers	**160**	**74%**
POTC: At World's End	154	48%
Prince Of Persia	**174**	**83%**
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	193	68%
Prince Of Persia Trilogy	**200**	**88%**
Prison Break: The Conspiracy	191	40%
Prototype	**181**	**76%**
Pure	171	80%
Pure Football	**194**	**69%**
Quantum Of Solace	175	57%
Quantum Theory	**197**	**29%**
Race Driver: GRID	167	85%
Racket Sports	**198**	**37%**
Rainbow Six Vegas	155	88%
Rainbow Six Vegas 2	**164**	**78%**
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time	186	82%
Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction	**160**	**72%**
Red Dead Redemption	**193**	**92%**
Relocates the familiar *GTA* formula to a superbly realised new setting and, in many ways, is unlike anything else as a result.		
Red Dead Redemption: Undead Nightmare	199	87%

game	issue	score
Red Faction: Guerrilla	**180**	**80%**
Resident Evil 5	177	86%
Resident Evil 5: Gold Edition	**190**	**86%**
Resistance: Fall Of Man	151	83%
Resistance 2	**173**	**90%**
With its impressive set pieces and glorious multiplayer mode, *Resistance 2* is one of the best FPSs on the PS3.		
Resonance Of Fate	191	79%
Ridge Racer 7	**151**	**75%**
Rise Of The Argonauts	176	58%
Rock Band	**169**	**94%**
Rock Band could be the best rhythm-action game ever. Especially if you're playing with a group of friends. Even better after a few beers.		
Rock Band 2	**179**	**96%**
With the incredible tracklist, tweaked engine, and new modes, this is easily the best rhythm-action game currently available.		
Rock Band 3	199	84%
Rogue Warrior	**188**	**09%**
R.U.S.E.	197	82%
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	**180**	**76%**
Saints Row 2	172	79%
Saw	**186**	**52%**
Saw II: Flesh & Blood	198	36%
Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection	**177**	**85%**
SBK 08	172	55%
SBK X: Superbike World Championship	**193**	**67%**
Sega Rally	**158**	**92%**
Simply the best rally game on the PS3. Unless simulation is your bag then you'll want to go for *Colin McRae*. Not much in it, really.		
Sega Superstars Tennis	165	68%
Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes	**198**	**76%**
Shaun White Skateboarding	198	70%
Shaun White Snowboarding	**173**	**72%**
Shellshock 2: Blood Trails	177	32%
Silent Hill: Homecoming	**174**	**64%**
Simpsons Game	160	82%
SingStar	**159**	**80%**
Singstar Guitar	199	70%
SingStar Pop Edition	**179**	**81%**
Singularity	195	80%
Skate	**159**	**86%**
Skate 2	175	82%
Skate 3	**192**	**86%**
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	190	78%
Sonic The Hedgehog	**151**	**52%**
Sonic Unleashed	175	48%
Soul Calibur IV	**169**	**94%**
Even the gimmicky appearance of Darth Vader can't spoil *Soul Calibur IV*. Another wonderful addition to the franchise.		
Spider-Man 3	**155**	**33%**
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	197	69%
Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows	**173**	**55%**
Splatterhouse	200	58%
Splinter Cell Double Agent	**153**	**79%**
Split/Second: Velocity	**192**	**90%**
Just beating *Blur* to the chequered flag, *Split/Second* is a wonderfully intense racing game in the *Burnout* mould.		
Sports Champions	**196**	**83%**
Star Ocean: The Last Hope International	190	63%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	**171**	**65%**
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	199	61%
Start The Party!	**196**	**72%**
Stormrise	178	51%
Stranglehold	**159**	**65%**

**denotes import review*

GAMING CLICHÉS & VIDEOGAME LOGIC



Falling from height won't hurt/will kill you

THIS POPPED BACK into our collective mind recently, thanks to the *Prince Of Persia* and *Sly Cooper* HD collections. You see, there are some heights it is fine to fall from, whereas there are other heights where if you fall from them you will die. Makes sense, right?

Wrong. Because it is all too easy to fall from a height *exactly the same* distance from the ground as a previous height-falling and yet die, whereas previously you had simply seen a small chunk of your health deducted. A drop from two metres? A mild irritation. A drop from 6.56 feet? *DEATH*. It's as illogical as it is commonplace.

Rather than just being a trope we accept, as with many other clichés, the falling survival/death ratio can actually get in the way of fun when gaming. It makes it harder to judge where you can and can't make mistakes, for one thing. Fortunately recent years have seen the trend fall by the wayside somewhat,

making it more of a curio than anything else.

Obviously it's something that's been papered over in recent years, mainly by making it so you can never do a jump wrong (partially true in *Uncharted*, massively true in *Enslaved*). This is a blessing and a curse, as while it makes platformers less frustrating, it also makes them far too easy. Maybe they'll fix it in future though, eh? No? Oh.

OLD GAMES THAT AREN'T AS BAD AS WE THOUGHT THEY WOULD BE

This month:
Destruction Derby

WE AVOIDED RE-PLAYING *Destruction Derby* when it came out on PSN because we didn't want to spoil the memory. In our minds it was a spectacular game. How could it live up to the memory?

AFTER ALL, IT was released in the days of PSone, when 3D was in its infancy and devs were getting to grips with the console's hardware. It would surely be a bad trip down memory lane. Right?

WRONG. IN A bout of boredom, we played it. It's quick, smooth and still a lot of fun. Races are as chaotic as we remember and it's still rather open to the notion of the player just mucking about.

IT'S NOT *BRILLIANT* – it's just held up a lot better than our brains thought it would. It's rough-looking, you can't flip your cars and the races are a bit boring after a while. But still, we're not complaining.

WE ALSO STILL believe that *Destruction Derby 2* is a lot of fun but seeing as we've already been wrong once, the precedent for our brain-memories to go wrong again is there.

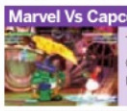
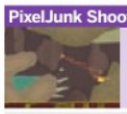
game	issue	score
Street Fighter IV	**176**	**95%**
The best beat-'em-up on the PS3, probably the best beat-'em-up ever, and maybe even the best game ever. Our poor little thumbs.		
Stuntman: Ignition	**157**	**82%**
SuperCar Challenge	183	66%
Superstars V8: Next Challenge	**190**	**55%**
Superstars V8 Racing	181	63%
Super Street Fighter IV	**191**	**90%**
The fact that you're buying a lot of stuff you've probably bought already is the only drawback to what is the best fighter ever made.		
Tekken 6	**184**	**94%**
There are flaws that hurt the experience, but nothing, *nothing*, stops *Tekken 6* from being an intense, tactical and brilliant fighting game.		
The Beatles: Rock Band	**184**	**96%**
It's a gorgeous game that'll make Beatles fans feel like they're being swaddled in a veil of pure joy. A breathtaking product.		
The Bourne Conspiracy	168	72%
The Club	**163**	**80%**
The Darkness	**154**	**91%**
This unique FPS combines the best bits of *Mafia* and war films along with some highly innovative gameplay elements.		
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	**152**	**91%**
This proves once and for all that Western RPGs are better than Japanese ones! Sort of. Whatever, *Oblivion* is an awesome game.		
The Fight	199	42%
The Godfather	**151**	**37%**
The Godfather II	178	38%
The Golden Compass	**162**	**32%**
The Incredible Hulk	168	52%
The King Of Fighters XII	**182**	**82%**
The Orange Box	**161**	**93%**
Five brilliant games for the price of one, what on Earth could be better than that? Nothing, that's what. *Absolutely nothing.*		
The Saboteur	**187**	**67%**
The Shoot	199	76%
The Sims 3	**199**	**87%**
The Sly Collection	200	84%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07	**151**	**88%**
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	158	73%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09	**171**	**86%**
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	181	69%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11	**194**	**60%**
Time Crisis 4	166	69%
Time Crisis: Razing Storm	**199**	**58%**
TimeShift	162	72%
TNA Impact!	**171**	**71%**
Tom Clancy's EndWar	173	80%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X	**177**	**75%**
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2	196	69%
Tomb Raider: Underworld	**173**	**83%**
Tony Hawk's Project 8	151	85%
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground	**160**	**72%**
Tony Hawk: Ride	188	52%
Top Spin 3	**168**	**71%**
Tornado Outbreak	186	56%
Toy Story 3	**195**	**82%**
Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen	182	41%
Transformers: The Game	**156**	**34%**
Transformers: War For Cybertron	194	80%
Trinity Universe	**194**	**61%**
Tron Evolution	200	17%
Turning Point: Fall Of Liberty	**165**	**40%**
Turok	163	46%
TV Superstars	**199**	**53%**
UEFA EURO 2008	165	62%
UFC Undisputed 2009	**180**	**90%**
Undisputed is gorgeous to look at, it's incredibly deep, and it's one of the most addictive fighters we've played in ages.		
UFC Undisputed 2010	193	88%
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	**161**	**87%**

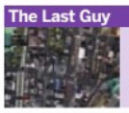
game	issue	score
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	**185**	**96%**
Among Thieves has proven itself to be a real work of class. It's one of the best games in recent years.		
Unreal Tournament III	**162**	**88%**
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	151	54%
Valkyria Chronicles	**173**	**82%**
Vancouver 2010	189	76%
Vanquish	**197**	**93%**
A brilliant surprise from the developer of *Bayonetta* and easily one of the best games we've played in 2010.		
Viking: Battle For Asgard	**165**	**74%**
Virtua Fighter 5	151	83%
Virtua Tennis 2009	**180**	**80%**
Virtua Tennis 3	**150**	**91%**
Pick-up-and-play gameplay strikes another blow, proving that the PS3 is currently at its best when it keeps it simple.		
Wanted: Weapons Of Fate	179	63%
Warhawk	**157**	**84%**
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Way Of The Samurai 3	**190**	**16%**
Wet	184	41%
Wheelman	**178**	**72%**
Where The Wild Things Are	188	56%
White Knight Chronicles	**190**	**55%**
Wolfenstein	183	72%
World Snooker Championship 2007	**151**	**56%**
WRC: FIA World Rally Championship	197	76%
WSC REAL 09: World Snooker Championship	**177**	**67%**
WWE Legends Of Wrestlemania	178	80%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2008	**159**	**88%**
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2009	173	74%
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2010	**185**	**77%**
WWE SmackDown Vs Raw 2011	199	63%
X-Blades	**178**	**54%**
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	179	71%
Yakuza 3	**191**	**80%**
Yakuza 4*	193	75%

PS STORE LISTING

game	issue	score
1942: Joint Strike	**170**	**74%**
3-On-3 NHL Arcade	177	62%
After Burner Climax	**193**	**91%**
Classic, frantic and utterly brilliant arcade action from Sega. A fine example of what the company is best known for.		
Age Of Booty	172	81%
Alien Breed: Impact	**196**	**80%**
Anarchy: Rush Hour	194	73%
Aqua Panic	**193**	**68%**
Battlefield 1943	182	89%
Bishi Bashi Special!	**175**	**61%**
Bionic Commando Rearmed	169	88%
Blacklight: Tango Down	**200**	**64%**
Blade Kitten	197	72%
Blast Factor	**152**	**72%**
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode I	188	65%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode II	**188**	**61%**
Blue Toad Murder Files Episodes 4/5/6	193	70%
Bomberman Ultra	**185**	**82%**
Braid	**188**	**93%**
We had to wait quite a while, but time is what we have plenty of both with and for *Braid*. Simply brilliant.		
Burn Zombie Burn	**178**	**85%**
Call Of Duty Classic	**188**	**90%**
It doesn't have *MW2*'s polish but it's a great game both as a slice of history and in its own right.		
Calling All Cars	**155**	**81%**
Castle Crashers	200	88%
Catan	**195**	**85%**
Comet Crash	186	84%

game	issue	score
Command & Conquer: Red Alert	**168**	**70%**
Command & Conquer Red Alert: Retaliation	176	55%
Command & Conquer Red Alert 3: Commander's Challenge	**185**	**68%**
Command & Conquer	175	44%
Cool Boarders	**173**	**57%**
Cool Boarders 2	175	31%
Costume Quest	**199**	**70%**
Crash Bandicoot	172	77%
Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped	**174**	**82%**
Crash Commando	174	80%
Crash Team Racing	**170**	**79%**
Crazy Taxi	200	80%
Crescent Pale Mist	**200**	**70%**
Critter Crunch	**188**	**91%**
This is yet another beautiful, cute and high-class puzzler on the PSN that works perfectly and is a joy to play.		
Crystal Defenders	184	48%
Dark Mist	**164**	**53%**
Dead Space: Ignition	199	47%
DeathSpank	**195**	**83%**
Destruction Derby	01	80%
.detuned	**186**	**50%**
Digger HD	186	52%
Diner Dash	**190**	**66%**
Driver	**171**	**90%**
With the most cinematic car chases ever seen in a game, *Driver* made a huge impact in 1998. Despite ropey graphics, it's still a playable title.		
Droplitz	**184**	**91%**
Droplitz is a superb puzzler that blends *Rez*-style layers of music, pipes and dials to create one of the most satisfying puzzlers in years.		
Earthworm Jim HD	**196**	**89%**
echochrome	169	85%
Elefunk	**170**	**45%**
Everybody's Golf 2	62	83%
Fade To Black	**09**	**44%**
Fat Princess	183	65%
Fatal Inertia EX	**168**	**65%**
FIFA 09 Ultimate Team	178	61%
Final Fight: Double Impact	**193**	**90%**
This scrolling-fighter classic from 1989 makes an almost faultless appearance on PSN. Stick it on your download list.		
Final Fantasy VII	**181**	**96%**
Even after all these years it still holds up. In fact, our mark seems to have gone up 3% since 1997.		
Final Fantasy VIII	**190**	**90%**
A truly engaging RPG – if you've never experienced the game before then make sure this is the next thing you download.		
Final Fantasy IX	**195**	**90%**
Never gets the love it deserves, but this PSN release gives you the chance to experience Square Enix's refreshing RPG all over again.		
Flight Control HD	198	85%
Flock!	**179**	**70%**
flOw	**151**	**90%**
Another 90% game for the PS3, another lesson in simple, addictive gameplay. *flOw* is an innovative title available on the Network.		
Flower	176	85%
Frogger Returns	**190**	**35%**
G-Police	27	84%
Geon	**175**	**71%**
Go! Puzzle	152	58%
Gran Turismo HD	**150**	**75%**
Gravity Crash	187	85%
Greed Corp	**191**	**75%**
GTI Club+	174	72%
Gundemonium Collection	**197**	**80%**
Gunstar Heroes	181	85%
Hamsterball	**194**	**72%**
Hardcore 4x4	15	81%
Hasbro Family Game Night	**187**	**60%**
Heavy Weapon	187	75%
High Velocity Bowling	**163**	**50%**

game	issue	score
Hi-Octane	178	64%
Hustle Kings	**190**	**87%**
Hyperballoid HD	188	70%
Inferno Pool	**181**	**81%**
International Track & Field	171	80%
Interpol: The Trail Of Doctor Chaos	**185**	**48%**
Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao	185	70%
Jet Rider 2	**176**	**71%**
Joe Danger	**194**	**96%**
Simply put, *Joe Danger* is one of the best games you'll currently find on the PSN. Buy it. Buy it now.		
Judge Dredd	**18**	**19%**
Jumping Flash	172	55%
Kick-Ass The Game	**194**	**60%**
Kula World	172	71%
Landit Bandit	**195**	**66%**
Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light	**198**	**90%**
Lara is back to her best in *The Guardian Of Light*. *Tomb Raider* fans will love it and for just £9.99 everyone else should, too.		
Lead & Gold: Gangs Of The Wild West	193	65%
Lemmings	**151**	**79%**
Linger In Shadows	173	69%
LocoRoco Cocoreccho!	**159**	**80%**
Lumines Supernova	**178**	**90%**
Probably the best puzzle game on the PSN, which is saying something because there's loads of competition.		
Madden NFL Arcade	188	58%
Magic Carpet	**179**	**65%**
Marvel Vs Capcom 2	**182**	**90%**
 This game has an astonishing amount to offer if you're prepared to plunge into its murky depths.		
Matt Hazard: Blood Bath And Beyond	189	69%
MediEvil	**173**	**45%**
Mega Man 9	172	75%
Mega Man 10	**192**	**82%**
Metal Gear Solid	**187**	**93%**
While it looks rather rough now, the game itself remains a real high point in the franchise. Simply essential.		
Metal Gear Solid Online	175	45%
Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge Special Edition	**195**	**94%**
The HD remake of arguably the best game in the *Monkey Island* series is a more than welcome addition to the PSN.		
Motorhead	**173**	**60%**
Namco Museum Essentials	193	60%
Noby Noby Boy	**177**	**85%**
Nucleus	155	82%
Numblast	**183**	**60%**
N20	37	70%
OutRun Online Arcade	**180**	**80%**
Pac-Man Championship Edition DX	**201**	**91%**
Bold, bright, insanely addictive – this re-imagining of the retro classic is an essential addition to anybody's PSN library.		
Pain	183	69%
Peggle	**189**	**94%**
So addictive it should come with some sort of government warning. Terrific value for money and a superb little puzzle game.		
PixelJunk Eden	**169**	**67%**
PixelJunk Monsters	**163**	**94%**
The second game in the *PixelJunk* series is great fun and brilliantly addictive. Buy it and play it constantly for hours on end!		
PixelJunk Shooter	**187**	**93%**
 Q-Games delivers excellence on the PSN once again with its *PixelJunk* series, this time in the form of a classic shoot-'em-up.		
Piyotama	162	62%
Planet Minigolf	**196**	**58%**
Polar Panic	190	65%
Populous: The Beginning	**46**	**70%**
Prince Of Persia Classic	173	67%
Puzzle Chronicles	**194**	**70%**

game	issue	score
Puzzle Quest Galactrix	181	68%
Q*bert	**58**	**53%**
Rag Doll Kung Fu: Fists Of Plastic	179	83%
Rampage: World Tour	**29**	**77%**
Ratchet & Clank: Quest For Booty	170	69%
Rayman	**01**	**76%**
Revenge Of The Wounded Dragons	191	60%
Riff: Everyday Shooter	**162**	**86%**
Rocket Knight	194	74%
Rocketmen: Axis Of Evil	**165**	**63%**
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 1	**194**	**90%**
Clever, funny and taxing in all the right ways, we're very happy that the Freelance Police are on PlayStation 3.		
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 2	**194**	**92%**
This is even better than the first episode due to the fact it has better puzzles and even funnier dialogue.		
Savage Moon	**175**	**87%**
Scott Pilgrim Vs The World	197	77%
Section 8	**193**	**78%**
Shank	197	86%
Shatter	**183**	**91%**
Sheep	171	78%
Siren Blood Curse	**170**	**62%**
Smash Cars	184	50%
SOCOM Confrontation	**178**	**55%**
Soldner-X 2: Final Prototype	195	70%
Sonic 4: Episode One	**199**	**82%**
Sonic Adventure	198	63%
Spin Jam	**174**	**32%**
Syphon Filter	**48**	**93%**
Gabe Logan's gritty PSone adventure has shadowed all that came after. As always, the original really is best.		
Snakeball	176	92%
Star Trek: D-A-C	**189**	**57%**
Street Fighter Alpha: Warrior's Dream	159	57%
Street Skater 2	**178**	**40%**
Super Puzzle Fighter II HD Turbo Remix	168	78%
Super Rub-A-Dub	**151**	**83%**
Supersonic Acrobatic Rocket-Powered Battle-Cars	177	65%
Super Stardust HD	**155**	**74%**
Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix	176	72%
Switchball	**191**	**75%**
Swords And Soldiers	199	88%
Syphon Filter 3	**170**	**80%**
Tales Of Monkey Island	**196**	**91%**
Telltale Games' excellent modern addition to the *Monkey Island* franchise finally sees the light of day on PSN. Go pick it up.		
Tank Battles	**186**	**68%**
Tekken HD	150	80%
Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online	**161**	**87%**
The Last Guy	**171**	**91%**
 *Snake* meets *Pac-Man* meets GoogleMaps. *The Last Guy* is yet another innovative and compelling addition to the PSN's line-up.		
The Punisher: No Mercy	**182**	**49%**
The Secret Of Monkey Island Special Edition	**195**	**92%**
LucasArts' classic point-and-click adventure gets an HD makeover and will hopefully be the first of many classics heading to PSN.		
Theme Hospital	32	80%
Theme Park	**174**	**80%**
TMNT: Turtles in Time Re-shelled	186	57%
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six	**54**	**34%**
Top Gun	198	53%
Topotai: Spinning Through The Worlds	**183**	**61%**
ToyHome	162	31%
Trash Panic	**181**	**79%**
Trials Of Topaq	159	50%
Trine	**184**	**85%**
Tumble	198	70%
Uno	**189**	**85%**
Vagrant Story	189	82%
Vandal Hearts: Flames Of Judgment	**192**	**87%**
Wakeboarding HD	192	65%
Warhawk: Operation Fallen Star	**171**	**80%**

game	issue	score
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
WipEout	**01**	**89%**
WipEout HD	172	84%
Wolfenstein	**181**	**70%**
Worms	**179**	**91%**
There's a reason *Worms* is still going strong, and that's because people never get tired of its fun personality and addictive gameplay.		
Worms 2: Armageddon	198	87%
Zuma	**182**	**78%**

PSP minis LISTING

Alien Havoc	186	68%
Bloons	**186**	**65%**
Brainpipe	186	70%
BreakQuest	**186**	**45%**
Field Runners	186	85%
Fortix	**186**	**57%**
Funky Punch	186	49%
Hero Of Sparta	**186**	**57%**
Kahoots	186	88%
Pinball Fantasies	**186**	**90%**
Pinball Fantasies was originally released on the Amiga and features four tables and some excellent pinball gaming.		
Puzzle Scape	**186**	**75%**
Tetris	**186**	**93%**
How it is possible to make Tetris feel so fresh and so much fun again we don't know, but it's managed here.		
Vempire	186	67%

PSP LISTING

300: March To Glory	152	59%
Ace Combat X	**147**	**72%**
Ace Combat: Joint Assault	194	79%
After Burner: Black Falcon	**152**	**82%**
Ape Academy	134	44%
Ape Academy 2	**145**	**52%**
Ape Escape P	140	37%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	**190**	**45%**
Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines	187	77%
Astonishia Story	**142**	**68%**
Beaterator	186	72%
Blade Dancer: Lineage Of Light	**145**	**45%**
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger Portable	194	84%
Blood Bowl	**184**	**53%**
Bomberman	150	83%
Boulder Dash: Rocks!	**165**	**69%**
Breath Of Fire III	138	82%
Brothers In Arms: D-Day	**149**	**69%**
Burnout Dominator	153	65%
Burnout Legends	**134**	**94%**
Despite being more of a 'best of' than a completely new game, *Legends* is the best racing game on the PSP.		
Buzz! Brain Bender	175	68%
Capcom Classics Collection Reloaded	**147**	**80%**
Capcom Classics Collection Remixed	141	72%
Cars	**143**	**60%**
Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles	163	78%
Championship Manager	**137**	**65%**
Championship Manager 2006	140	32%
Cid The Dummy	**180**	**32%**
Coded Arms	134	53%
Call Of Duty: Roads To Victory	**153**	**69%**
Colin McRae Rally 2005 Plus	134	84%
Crisis Core – Final Fantasy VII	**167**	**87%**
Crush	154	80%
Dante's Inferno	**191**	**76%**
Dead Or Alive: Paradise	192	56%
Disgaea: Afternoon Of Darkness	**161**	**92%**
An absolute must-have for RPG fans, and one of the best titles available on the PSP. A simply brilliant game.		

**denotes import review*

PLAY'S DIARY

DAY 4: Inspired by the student protests, the **Play** team decided to get involved in some 'kettling' of their own. Though the only thing that was unfairly confined into a small space for doing no wrong was a few Fairtrade tea bags.

DAY 10: This spirit of anarchy continued throughout the month, as the team rebelled against any and all authority they could find. Here, for example, we saw Ian making an angry, uncouth gesture at a policeman. Civil disobedience never looked so fat.

DAY 17: Not even this bloke from the stock photography library was enough to calm the upswell in anti-establishment rhetoric blaring forth from the team. At one point, Chris said: "traffic wardens – what's up with that?" It was *anarchy*.

DAY 18: After a particularly heavy session of protest, where the team accused the local council of using paper that was "too yellow" for standard letter-paper, celebratory cups of tea were ingested. It was decided this point would be referred to as 'tea-riffic'.

DAY 21: The three-week protests of the **Play** team finally came to a close, handily just in time for the end of year break. Rather than continue the programme of unrest into 2011, the team vows to end their violent uprising. Via cute kittens.

Alan Shearer 1995 vs Alan Shearer 2010

Alan Shearer 1995. Yesterday.

1995. SO LONG ago. At the peak of his powers, one Alan Shearer was at the forefront of the most devastating attack in the Premiership – the SAS – at Blackburn Rovers. The Geordie netted 34 league goals and helped his home nation to the semi-finals of the European Championships in the summer of 1996 (though that's technically not 1995). Generally speaking, Alan Shearer 1995 was one of the best strikers England had ever seen, and he wasn't even at his physical peak. This fine season was capped off with the PFA Players' Player of the Season award . While Shearer's quality level would be maintained for the rest of his career, it was Alan Shearer 1995 where he really broke out in the public eye – and for some, he was never better than in this guise. **34/5**

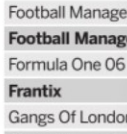
Alan Shearer 2010. Yesterday.

WHILE THE 1995 edition of Shearer earned plaudits, praise and the love of a nation, Alan Shearer 2010 has earned nothing but scorn. Retirement was followed by a journey into punditry, a brief soiree into management and a return to TV analysis. Alan Shearer 2010 has his technique honed to perfection – from an Alan Shearer 2010 perspective. He *thinks* he's doing the best he can – or to put it in a parlance the Geordie could understand: "he'll be thinking the lad done good". World Cup Alan Shearer 2010 was a special case, or as it's also known "a new low", and his lack of understanding or recognition for players *not* playing at Newcastle is genuinely harmful to football coverage. And to cap it all off, the graphics for Alan Shearer 2010 aren't even as good as the ones from Alan Shearer 1995. **0/5**

game	issue	score
Dissidia: Final Fantasy	184	60%
Disgaea 2: Dark Hero Days	**190**	**87%**
Dragon Ball Z: Shin Budokai 2	154	50%
Driver 76	**154**	**68%**
Dungeons & Dragons: Tactics	159	55%
Dungeon Siege: Throne Of Agony	**148**	**85%**
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	179	69%
EA Replay	**147**	**74%**
echochrome	169	85%
echoshift	**191**	**73%**
Everybody's Golf 2	167	86%
Everybody's Tennis	**195**	**88%**
Every Extend Extra	145	84%
Exit	**138**	**65%**
EyePet	199	77%
F1 2009	**187**	**66%**
F1 Grand Prix	134	81%
Field Commander	**145**	**83%**
FIFA 06	136	43%
FIFA 07	**147**	**81%**
FIFA 11	198	69%
FIFA World Cup 2010	**193**	**65%**
Fired Up	134	60%
Final Fantasy	**164**	**63%**
Final Fantasy Tactics	159	86%
FlatOut: Head On	**164**	**79%**
Football Manager 2007	147	62%
Football Manager Handheld	**139**	**82%**
Football Manager Handheld 2008	161	49%
Football Manager Handheld 2010	**187**	**60%**
Formula One 06	143	78%
Frantix	**136**	**36%**
Gangs Of London	144	65%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	**157**	**42%**
Ghost Recon Predator	200	60%
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	**188**	**55%**
Gitaroo Man Lives!	144	79%
Go! Sudoku	**137**	**45%**
God Of War: Chains Of Olympus	165	84%
God Of War: Ghost Of Sparta	**199**	**79%**
Gradius Collection	144	80%
Gran Turismo	**184**	**85%**
Gripshift	136	81%
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	**185**	**95%**

Bar some combat control issues, *GTA: Chinatown Wars* has perfectly translated to the PSP. It's a must-have game.

GTA: Liberty City Stories	**135**	**95%**



Successfully taking the *GTA* formula and putting it on one UMD of pure goodness, this is one of the PSP's best games.

GTA: Vice City Stories	**147**	**96%**

Improving on its predecessor, the only way *Vice City Stories* could be topped is if *San Andreas* comes to the PSP.

Half-Minute Hero	191	87%
Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire	**136**	**69%**
Hellboy: Science Of Evil	170	60%
Holy Invasion Of Privacy, Badman! What Did I Do To Deserve This?	**186**	**73%**
Hot Pixel	155	73%
Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings	**181**	**60%**
Infected	141	68%
Innocent Life: A Futuristic Harvest Moon	**154**	**70%**
International Athletics	170	40%
Invizimals	**187**	**71%**
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
Juiced: Eliminator	**141**	**70%**
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	160	80%
Kao Challengers	**137**	**60%**
Killzone: Liberation	146	83%
Kingdom Hearts: Birth By Sleep	**196**	**88%**
Lemmings	138	63%
LittleBigPlanet	**186**	**90%**

Refined in certain areas and slightly worse in Create mode but still a fantastic addition to PSP's lineup.

LocoRoco	**143**	**94%**

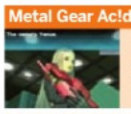
We called this the definitive PSP title in our review, and it is a game that no PSP owner should be without.

LocoRoco 2	**173**	**82%**

game	issue	score
LocoRoco Midnight Carnival	186	81%
Lumines II	**137**	**74%**
Madden NFL 06	137	74%
Marvel Trading Cards	**155**	**38%**
Me And My Katamari	138	86%
Medal Of Honor Heroes	**147**	**72%**
Medievil Resurrection	134	53%
Mercury Meltdown	**145**	**66%**
Metal Slug Anthology	**150**	**91%**

We're not too clued up on retro games, but we do know our *Metal Slug* and the *Anthology* is a great compilation.

Metal Gear Ac!d 2	**138**	**92%**

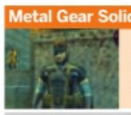


More card-based espionage starring everyone's favourite mullet-head, with funky new cel-shaded graphics.

Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker	**193**	**92%**

A fantastic entry in the *Metal Gear Solid* series and one of the best games on PSP. Wonderful.

Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops	**150**	**91%**



A proper *Metal Gear Solid* game on a portable machine. It was never likely to disappoint, and it didn't. A great title.

Miami Vice	**144**	**82%**
Micro Machines V4	142	71%
Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition	**134**	**57%**
ModNation Racers	193	70%
Monster Hunter Freedom	**140**	**81%**
Monster Hunter Freedom 2	157	59%
Monster Hunter Freedom Unite	**181**	**77%**
MotoGP	146	75%
Motorstorm: Arctic Edge	**184**	**72%**
Mytran Wars	179	85%
Namco Museum Battle Collection	**136**	**68%**
Naruto Shippuden Legends: Akatsuki Rising	185	46%
Naruto Ultimate Ninja Heroes 2	**169**	**46%**
NBA Ballers: Rebound	139	61%
Need For Speed Undercover	**175**	**57%**
Need For Speed Most Wanted	136	73%
No Heroes Allowed	**199**	**69%**
OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast	**139**	**93%**

The arcade classic comes to PSP and is just as good as it's ever been. The perfect game to play on a rainy Sunday afternoon.

PaRappa The Rapper	155	88%
Patapon	**163**	**86%**
Patapon 2	177	87%
Patchwork Heroes	**192**	**85%**
Pirates Of The Caribbean	143	52%
PixelJunk Monster Deluxe	**185**	**86%**
Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	163	77%
Pocket Racers	**144**	**49%**
PoPoLoCRoIS	142	71%
Power Stone Collection	**145**	**88%**
PQ – Practical Intelligence Quotient	141	52%
Prince Of Persia Revelations	**138**	**69%**
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	194	52%
Prinny: Can I Really Be The Hero?	**181**	**80%**
PSN Collection: Power Pack	173	70%
PSN Collection: Puzzle Pack	**173**	**54%**
Pursuit Force	134	83%
Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice	**159**	**76%**
Puzzle Chronicles	190	61%
Puzzle Quest	**153**	**66%**
R-Type Tactics	170	74%
Rainbow Six Vegas	**156**	**78%**
Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters	154	78%
Rengoku 2	**144**	**72%**
Resistance: Retribution	177	76%
Ridge Racer 2	**145**	**78%**
Ridge Racer	**132**	**91%**

Arguably the best launch game on the PSP, *Ridge Racer* still stands up as one of the finest racing games for the system.

Rock Band Unplugged	**181**	**92%**

Unplugged comes highly recommended. It's superb – there are few better rhythm-action games on the handheld.

Rocky Balboa	150	68%
Secret Agent Clank	**169**	**79%**

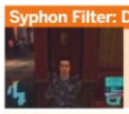
game	issue	score
Sega Mega Drive Collection	177	79%
Sega Rally	**158**	**90%**

Very nearly as good as its PlayStation 3 counterpart. Which is a good thing because that's the best rally game money can buy.

Shinobido: Tales Of The Ninja	150	60%
Silent Hill Origins	**160**	**87%**
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	190	52%
Smash Court Tennis	**154**	**58%**
SOCOM Fire Team 2	154	70%
SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo 3	**190**	**71%**
SOCOM: Tactical Strike	160	85%
SOCOM: US Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo	**140**	**69%**
Sonic Rivals	147	70%
Sonic Rivals 2	**162**	**35%**
Soul Calibur: Broken Destiny	**183**	**92%**

New modes and characters keep things interesting, while fights are as hectic and solid as ever.

Spider-Man 3	**162**	**32%**
Spinout	149	81%
Splinter Cell: Essentials	**139**	**71%**
Split/Second: Velocity	200	71%
SSX On Tour	**138**	**76%**
Star Ocean: Second Evolution	178	78%
Star Trek: Tactical Assault	**148**	**59%**
Star Wars Battlefront II	137	74%
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron	**187**	**65%**
Star Wars: Lethal Alliance	148	69%
Star Wars: Renegade Squadron	**160**	**78%**
Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max	138	70%
Street Riders	**140**	**29%**
Super Monkey Ball Adventure	142	54%
Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror	**140**	**90%**



In the absence of a 'real' *MGS* game, it's left to Gabe Logan to carry the stealthy torch, and he does a fine job.

Tekken 6	**187**	**90%**

Fantastic to look at and fast and fluid to play, *Tekken 6* is the best game of the series on PSP.

Tekken: Dark Resurrection	**143**	**92%**

Tekken: Dark Resurrection is instantly playable and provides the PSP's first great brawler.

Tenchu: Shadow Assassins	179	71%
Tenchu: Time Of The Assassins	**146**	**51%**
The Con	153	59%
The Cube	**153**	**64%**
The Eye Of Judgment: Legends	191	57%
The Godfather Mob Wars	**136**	**66%**
The Lord Of The Rings: Tactics	136	66%
The Sims 2	**137**	**71%**
TNA Impact! Cross The Line	189	58%
TOCA 3	**152**	**70%**
Tokobot	140	79%
Tomb Raider: Anniversary	**156**	**81%**
Tomb Raider: Legend	140	72%
Twisted Metal Head-On	**134**	**54%**
UFC Undisputed 2010	197	80%
Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins	**145**	**88%**
Undead Knights	189	46%
Untold Legends: The Warrior's Code	**140**	**59%**
Valhalla Knights	158	49%
Valkyria Chronicles 2	**196**	**87%**
Valkyrie Profile: Lenneth	153	78%
Viewtiful Joe: Red Hot Rumble	**140**	**82%**
Virtua Tennis 3	152	88%
Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command	**161**	**70%**
What Did I Do To Deserve This My Lord!? 2	192	78%
WipEout Pulse	**159**	**86%**
WipEout Pure	**138**	**91%**

Exceeding all of our expectations as to what a handheld *WipEout* game could be, *Pure* is an essential PSP purchase.

World Of Pool	156	43%
World Tour Poker	**141**	**67%**
World Tour Soccer 2	142	40%
Worms: Open Warfare 2	**157**	**80%**
WWE SmackDown! Vs. RAW 2006	137	84%
WWE SmackDown! Vs. RAW 2007	**147**	**80%**
World Rally Championship	134	67%

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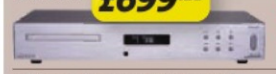

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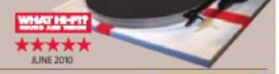

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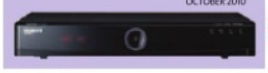

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Back Page

Tomb Raider: the official brainstorm documents

Okay, we've told people that "we are exploring things that have never been done before in this game", but what can we explore? We need IDEAS, guys and gals...

- Change Lara to man, name ~~Nathan... Indiana...~~ Dave "no"
- ~~Have Lara shoot NON-endangered species~~ Ha ha! Idiot
- Zombies? Hmm... explain more. Could work
- ~~Massive breasts~~ 1996 called, it wants its idea back
- Interrogation/torture scene. Man shouting 'MASON!' a lot ??? this could work, but who's Mason? Is he a tiger? Lara could shoot him!
- ~~Alternatively, man shouting 'JASON!' a lot~~ Don't be stupid. Nobody would ever put that in a game
- ~~Set game entirely in Stringfellows~~ Not classy enough – think Spearmint Rhino
- Re-form Core Design and let it develop One, that's not new. Two, don't be a moron
- Real-time mud physics. Good for marketing – could say 'Tomb Raider has the dirtiest woman in gaming!' on it and not be lying! I like your moxie, kid. I'll see if PEGI is okay with this
- Include what looks like domestic abuse in promotional artwork
  I like it – it's daring. Bit risky, though, and you know how we hate risk. Extremely unlikely right now
- Find a way to introduce Project $10 scheme YES!
- Put Lara in charge of a museum, overseeing the management of numerous ancient relics. Move control, naturally
  ? Management sims are due a comeback. Like Theme Hospital, but with a museum? Expand on this idea

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